

H E I M W E H

JOHN LUTHER LONG





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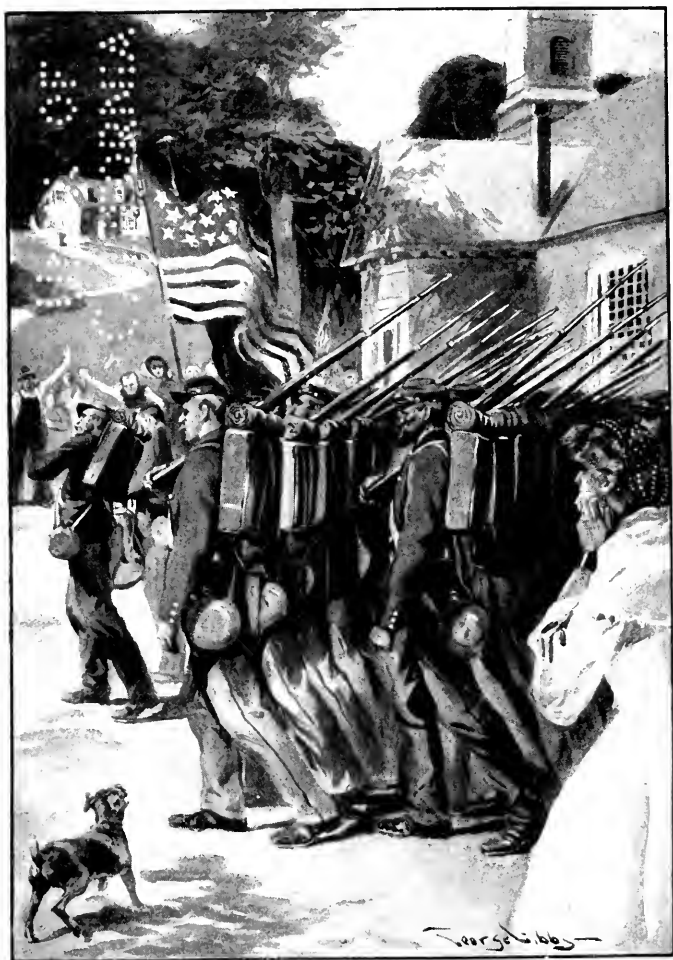
HEIMWEH

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“ So they marched away to the tune of ‘ The Girl I Left Behind Me ’ ”

HEIMWEH

THE SIREN * * * THE
LOADED GUN * * LIE-
BEREICH * "IUPITER
TONANS" * * * * "SIS"
THOR'S EMERALD * *
GUILE * * * * * * * *

By

JOHN LUTHER LONG

Author of "MADAME BUTTERFLY"
"NAUGHTY NAN" "MISS CHERRY
BLOSSOM" "THE FOX WOMAN" *Etc.*

ILLUSTRATED

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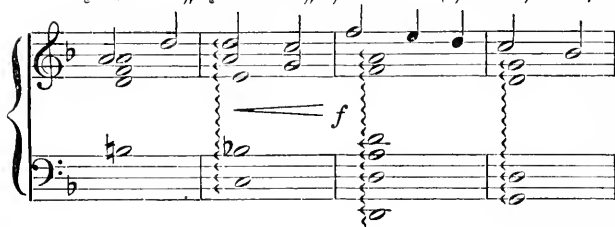
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AND MR. J. S. SMITH

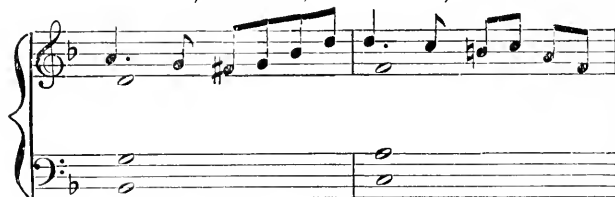
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WHETHER YOU BE SICK WITH
LONGING FOR THESE SQUALID
HOMES ON EARTH WHERE LOVE
IS NEVER SURE — OR FOR THOSE
SPLENDID MANSIONS IN OUR
FATHER'S HOUSE WHERE IT
WAITS ALWAYS — THESE ARE FOR
YOU * * * * *

Heim = weh, Heim = weh, himm = li = sches Seh = nen,



Das nach Lie = be, das nach Lie = ben



in der fer = nen Sei = math krankt.



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HEIMWEH

HEIMWEH¹

I

LIFE HAS NO FUTURE AT TWENTY-ONE

THE neighbors called them "Betsy and John" — *her* name first, always. Perhaps because she was short and aggressive, he tall and inclined to "lazy." Only inclined to lazy, understand. For, no one had ever caught him at it. Indeed, with a certain rustic intuition and much experience of his kind, they knew it was "in him" — that he had been "born to it" — and they liked him better for his constant vanquishment of the infirmity. They would have liked him anyhow — he was a very likable fellow. But Betsy they loved. Once in a while some zealous friend of John would contend that he was the very incarnation of industry. John, when he came to know of that sort

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of thing, always discouraged it — and did it firmly. He would point to the nimble fingers of his wife — a thing he was always glad to do — and say, sighing :

“ It is *that* — *she* — *it* — makes me ashamed — to lazy.”

She was twenty, he barely twenty-one, when they were married. She was a basket-maker, he a laborer. They lived in a little town on “the Border.” Differing with the utmost good nature in everything but one — in that they were exactly alike. They had no future — absolutely none ! They refused to have one. Strong with the vigor of youth — happy with the unreason of happiness — content with what came — wishing for nothing they had not — ambitious for nothing but a home — they lived but from day to day again — sleeping soundly, working gayly, thinking not. Why should they be vexed about a future — at twenty — twenty-one ?

Once in a while they went hungry — and laughed about it. But, usually, there was sufficient demand for her dainty wares ; and he was digging trenches in the streets of

the adjoining town for the pipes of the new gas company. He made as much as forty cents a day when he worked, while she averaged nearly twice as much. You can see that there was no reason why they should go hungry very often. And, indeed, once, when he felt particularly opulent, John bought Betsy a gold-plated brooch for her birthday. It was in 1835.

But did I say that there was one thing upon which they agreed—in that rejected future? Yes. A home—they wanted a home—a roof over their heads, they called it—that was all. But, even this was forgotten as the happy years went by.

“Home is wherever *we* are!” laughed Betsy.

Then came the children, and John began to talk and act and think like a very proper father—even though Betsy laughed at him.

“Betsy,” said John, once upon a time, pulling down his face, “we’d ought to begin thinking of the —” Betsy began to smile, but John went on, like a husband and father doing his duty — “er — think of the — er — roof!”

He almost shouted the last word — it seemed so ridiculous when he came to it.

“At twenty-two?” said Betsy.

John was rocking the cradle.

“But when a man gits to be a father —”

“*Papa!*” laughed Betsy at him, and John blushed and stopped.

But that wasn’t Betsy’s way — to chill John with an argument so irrefutable — and at such a distance! She flung her basket away, snatched the baby from the cradle, and, next, John had his whole family in his lap. His wife was laughing, the baby was blinking, and John was very happy.

“Roof!” — she was talking to the baby — “do you know what that is? *I* don’t. You haven’t any yet — neither have I. I’ve forgotten it. We are going to have one, of course — after a while — if your papa wants one — *now* — if he can’t wait — a minute —”

John put his hand on her mouth. She bit it and he kissed her. Then they were tangled in an embrace for a moment — the baby getting the worst of it.

“Look here,” said Betsy, then, “don’t you think you’ve got enough with us? Roof!”

“Yes,” confessed John, shamefacedly, “I don’t want you to bother no more about it.”

“I won’t,” said Betsy.

“We’ll have it — some day!” declared John, in his lazy way, “without any bothering!”

II

HAPPINESS IS BETTER THAN CHURCH

FOUR more were born — boys all — goodly and ruddy — like their little mother. But, one and all, they surprised and delighted her by growing tall like their father.

“You see, John,” said Betsy, “they are going to be big like you, and *good* like me.”

Well, one by one, they went out into the world — but never very far from the romping comrade-mother. Away from her the world was neither so gay nor so tender. They never found another woman so altogether lovely.

There was no work for any of them on Sunday, so they would all come home. Indeed, in the country of the Germans of Pennsylvania, no one ever worked on Sunday in that day and generation. And such Sundays as they were! No going to church, I fear — a heinous omission perhaps. But how could

they? There was gentle revelry in the little house from the first moment—not a soul of them would have missed that for any church on earth—and no church on earth would have done them so much good—then a feast. Sometimes—when all had work and wages were good—a stewed turkey! And, after it all, kisses and hugs and good-nights—till one thought it would never end.

And, after they were gone, Betsy would cry—and John would take her in his lap and say never a word—leaving her to fall asleep there.

But once, instead of sleeping, she sat up and took John by the throat.

“John! I’m glad they’re *not* girls—*any* of them.” For this used to be a complaint of Betsy’s—that none of them were girls.

“Yes,” said John, meekly.

She gripped his throat a little tighter and shook him.

“They’d git married if they were. Girls always do. But boys often have better sense. Ours have, anyhow.”

"*We* got married," ventured John.

"Well — *of course!*" said Betsy, choking him.

But the thing was in her mind all the week. There seemed danger. The next Sunday, at the table, she said :

"Look here! Why don't some of yous git — git — married?"

Her hand shook as she dealt out the gravy and waited for their answer.

They looked from one to the other. No one knew.

"Funny," laughed Ben, "but *I* never thought of it."

"Nor I," said Bart.

"Hanged if I know," piped Fred. "Don't see no girls like you —"

"Can I marry you, mammy?" laughed Tom, putting his arm around her as she came over to him. It was Tom she was most afraid of. For he was the youngest — and to her he was little short of a god. He had rebellious yellow hair and blue eyes — and little patches of whiskers were beginning to grow on his face.

"Yes," said his mother, sweeping his girlish lips with a kiss.

"Me, too," said "old" Ben — and he got it.

And so on all around while John smiled in ecstasy.

"Boys," said the little mother, "there ain't no girl *I* ever saw that's fit for any of yours — ain't so, John?"

John, of course, said yes.

Tom got up, and, after turning her back to the rest wiped the tears from his mother's eyes.

"Boys," announced the mother, "next Sunday there will be a turkey — and oyster stuffing!"

As she said it she went over and let her arms glide gently around the neck of Will, who had not spoken on the subject of marriage. He caught her hands and drew her arms closer while he smiled up at her — a little sadly. She kissed him on the great forehead, and he understood. There had been a brief love affair for him, but it was over. Simply a successful rival. He never spoke of it — nor did any one else. But at least two — understood.

III

OPEN THE DOOR TO JOY — ALWAYS

BUT Betsy had caught John surreptitiously saving — to buy the roof, he explained!

“We — we’re gitting old, you know,” he excused.

“Old! —”

Betsy caught up her dainty skirts — very high — and pirouetted before him.

“*Ein’, tswei, drei’, un’ fier. Dass macht sivve’ —*”

She stopped a moment.

“John! Don’t you remember Eisenkrantz’s husking — where I first saw you? Oh, John, what a gawk you were! And yit — and yit — John, do you remember *how* you danced that night? Come!”

She pulled him about with her in a very clumsy attempt at waltzing. Then she pushed him off.

“Oh, *you are* gitting old. But me —”

A few more mad whirls and she flung herself into his arms.

"Say, John, that's better than any roof."

"Er—what?" asked John, whose wits were often left behind by his wife's.

She came close and shouted in his ear:

"Joy!"

"Oh!" said John, patting her pretty hair.

She slipped her arm about him. And then her voice was very soft and loving.

"And our five boys! Such boys! Where is there another such five! If we *should* get old—if we *should* need a roof—why, John—there are our five handsome boys!"

She cried a little, and John asked her for the thousandth time why she did it.

"Why does a woman cry? For joy and sorrow—life and death—good and evil!"

"Oh!" said John, once more.

"John!" His wife woke up and gripped his throat again. "Ben needs a new horse,"—Ben was a huckster,— "Tom wants a drill,"—Tom was a farmer,— "and Fred *must* have a new Sunday suit. How much money have you saved, you rascal?"

John told her. And Ben got his horse, Tom got his drill, and Fred got his Sunday suit—and John saved no more.

But it was so—they were brave and loving fellows—all. And every Sunday—when they were gone—it was a game of hide-and-seek for Betsy and John—to find the money and presents they had left. Of course, they were all at places where she might easily discover them. But she always went shy of the most likely places at first—thus prolonging the search—sometimes until she was quite tired. In the pocket of her second-best dress (she always wore her best on Sunday)—in the frame of her warped toilet mirror—in the drawers of her scratched dressing bureau—in the loaves of her new bread!

Finally, when the boys all became prosperous, they made her stop weaving baskets, and him stop laboring in the streets; all of them dressed well, and they became quite a company of ladies and gentlemen. Neither John nor Betsy was precisely happy afterward. Sunday was longer in coming. But

they sighed for their idleness, laughed for their happiness—and did as the boys told them to do: sat still and looked pretty.

But there is such a thing as getting used even to idleness, and joy comes whether we work or not—if we are wise enough to let it come. And no one in that little cheap house ever shut the door on joy. So Betsy, after a while, learned to wear her Sunday clothes all the week, and John to shave every morning. And the door was kept open always to joy.

IV

WAR IS GLORIOUS AT THE BEGINNING BUT NOT AT THE END

THEN, one day, in '61, they formed in the town a "soldier company" to go to the "front." No one knew much about it—nor where the front was. No one doubted that it was to be a great frolic—no one but Betsy. And there, in the front rank, all together, as brothers should be, stood Betsy's five boys. And, as if this were not enough, there was John, too! With yellow chevrons on his sleeves—and a sword at his side—brave as a lion and proud as a major-general. Company corporal! Alas! perhaps the privates, too, might have carried swords had there been enough to go around.

John stood it as long as he could. For more than a week he swore that he would stay at home and take care of Betsy. He was too old to frolic. But he went to the drill ground every day. Once or twice he

drilled with them when some one was absent. He finally developed such a genius for military affairs that the captain went to Betsy and voiced John's yearnings—it was for his country that he wanted to fight—it was his duty to fight—it was a privilege to fight—it was a wife's duty to let him fight.

She let John go, too. For, after all, it was only a great frolic—they told her!

So they marched away to the tune of "The Girl I Left Behind Me," and the little mother went home to wait. It was very lonely from the first hour, and she willingly took up her work again. They scolded her when she wept, so she tried not to weep. They told her she ought not only to be willing to let them go, but be glad. She tried to think that she was glad. But in her heart she rebelled dismally. "We are coming, Father Abraham!" had been the cry—and her boys, too, had said, with a new light in their faces, which she, a woman, did not, could not, would not, understand, that they were going to fight for their country! Go and fight for their country when they might work for *her*—when they might have

those Sunday feasts — when she could darn their stockings — mend their clothes — have her arms about them — theirs about her — give them warm beds — plenty of food — while the country would give them poor food — poor clothes — the ground to sleep on — and no Sundays at home! She could not understand it. No woman who is a mother can. She thought of possible wounds on their splendid bodies — of them lying stark in the night upon some shot-torn battle-field — of burial unknown in some vast trench — of fever — and terrors — of hospitals — and even of the coming home — no more her boys — no more! Soldiers, then, soldiers with rough beards and rough voices. She never once thought of them coming home dead.

Alas! *her* country was bounded by the Rhine. This was *their* country!

But still, as they went, she prayed blindly:

“God bless you and keep you, my boys, and send you back to me as you go — *good* boys. Father Abraham, they are my all — everything on earth I love. Send them back as you receive them.”

V

WE GO OUT TO FIGHT UNDER THE FLAG; WE
RETURN — UNDER IT

It seemed cruel — it was cruel — that her prayer should be so utterly denied her — that they should all be killed. But so it fell out.

One by one they came home to her and were laid away in the churchyard of Saint Michael's, in their pine coffins and faded uniforms, with the honors of war. It was heart-breaking to have to follow them, one by one, to their graves — to the same Dead March in Saul — to the same muffled drums — to the cadenced tramp of soldiers — with the Stars and Stripes for shroud — with all the solemn pomp of war.

She thought only of the beautiful thing in the coffin to which she had given life. And each time she prayed dizzily — iterating it — so that God might perhaps the better hear:

“Our Father, who art in heaven—keep the rest—keep the rest—keep John.”

The last of them died at Gettysburg—in the first day’s fight.

It was only a few miles away, and on the third of July he came home. On the fourth, while cannons were bursting for joy, she was following once more the soldiers to the tune of the Dead March. It was the last. She had grown afraid to pray. But once more, at the open grave, she raised her hands:

“Our Father, who art in heaven—keep John,” she begged, in whispers.

When she got home there was a letter for her. It spoke of the devotion of her dead boys. It was almost as if the writer knew them—as she did. This letter was signed “A. Lincoln,” and read:

“Dear Madam:

“I have been shown in the files of the War Department a statement of the Adjutant-General of Pennsylvania that you are the mother of five sons who have died gloriously on the field of battle. I feel how weak and

fruitless must be any words of mine which should attempt to beguile you from the grief of a loss so overwhelming. But I cannot refrain from tendering to you the consolation that may be found in the thanks of the Republic they died to save. I pray that our heavenly Father may assuage the anguish of your bereavement, and leave you only the cherished memory of the loved and lost, and the solemn pride that must be yours to have laid so costly a sacrifice upon the altar of freedom."

"But they are dead!" cried Betsy to the letter. She cared nothing for the "cause" or for "freedom." They were dead.

VI

GROWING OLD IS ONLY AN IDEA — UNTIL WE KNOW

AND then, when the war was quite over, that last pitiful prayer was answered, and John came marching home — from the grand review — with a captain's straps on his shoulders — a minié ball in his thigh — and a perfectly proper sword — the gift of the United States of America! It is quite certain that John was very proud of the sword — and perhaps even of his limp.

And Betsy was as proud as he — quite. But not of the sword and limp. These, in secret, she hated as much as she could hate. Perhaps I had better say that she was only glad. You may be sure that his glory did not keep her off.

"I don't care if you *were* in twenty-one battles. You are only my dear old John."

"Only your old John," said the soldier.

"*Dear*, I said! And — and — you've got

to make up for all the rest — one multiplied by five, you know — *that* dear ”

She suddenly sobbed.

“Eh ? ” said John. Then — “Oh ! ”

He sobbed, too.

“And, as for that limp — I will cure that, or my name is not Betsy.”

And more sobs.

But for all her trying, he limped the more.

So that long afterward she said :

“John — I haven’t done it, and my name’s still Betsy.”

But there was no more sobbing about it.

“It’s better,” prevaricated John.

“No,” said Betsy, “it ain’t. Something is gone. I can’t do things any more.”

John thought a moment.

“Like when you reach out in the dark for something you know is there and it ain’t and you shiver,” he said then. “I used to do that at night on the ground — reach out for — you ! ”

“John ! ” cried Betsy, in her old manner, “I never heard you say so much at one time before — nor so nice. What’s the matter ? ”

"*You* don't say so much," said John. "*I'm* evening up now."

"Yes—yes—yes—dear John!" said Betsy, with a tear, she did not know for what—quite. "I must talk more."

"We've lost something and we've gained something—at another place," John went on. "I don't know what it is—but it's something."

"John, I know, and I'll tell you."

She came and knelt at his side and tried to reach his neck with her short arms.

"We're falling in love again!"

John suddenly held her off and stared.

"By jiminy!"

"Yes. It was so long to wait—and there is nobody but you and me now—and we have got to begin all over again. Don't you see?" And the tears fell again.

"No! I was always in love with you. No!"

And he was quite stubborn about it.

"Yes!" she cried.

"Yes," John agreed.

"No!" she laughed.

"No," laughed John.

After a moment she released herself, and, taking John by the throat in the old fashion, said :

"And, John, we *will* begin all over again. We're not old ! So there !"

She spread her skirts and whirled around on her toes.

"Not a day older than in '35," said John, with glistening eyes.

She flew upon him and took him again by the throat.

"John !" she cried, "that's a little *too* much !"

But John was not convinced — though she lifted her yellow hair and showed him where the gray was creeping in.

"But it's mighty sweet," she conceded.

They did exactly as they had planned — began all over again. John was as tender with her as he had been after that night of the husking. And Betsy was as devoted to John as she had been in that halcyon time.

"Growing old is just an idea," said the happy John, one day.

"Oh, of course," agreed Betsy, busily plaiting withes, "until you *know*!"

"Why, everything is just as it was thirty years ago — ain't it, Betsy?"

"John," laughed Betsy, trying to plunge upon him from her work, "did it ever occur to you that your love-making nowadays consists largely of recalling those other love-makings—in '35, you know?"

John thought a moment.

"Why, so it is, Betsy — so it is."

"All imagination."

"That's just as good — just as good," said John, stubbornly. "It's always new."

"Just as good," laughed his wife, "when you don't know no better — and we don't, John, do we?"

"No, thank God," said John, "and I don't want to."

"So don't I," said his wife, laughing.

"Betsy," asked John, "do you ever think of that roof any more?"

"Yes," answered Betsy, trying to be serious, "and we'll have it some of these days — never fear."

VII

MAKING BELIEVE BRINGS THINGS

FOR the next twenty years Betsy made baskets and John went in and out with his pick and shovel. But they earned less and less. And then the owner of their house died and left them to the tender mercy of his heirs. These promptly began to inquire about the arrears of rent.

"I don't know how much we are back, but I guess it's a good deal," smiled Betsy.

John was troubled. "If we'd only kep' on saving, we might own the house by now, and —"

Betsy put her hand on his mouth — and some of the fingers into it.

"We made better use of it, John, ten thousand times better use of it! John — we bought happiness with it! And they are all dead, now, back there at Saint Michael's. And there is not a thing to regret — not one.

Oh, thank God — thank God! If we had saved that money, there would be something to regret. We would have to remember that one was denied this — the other — that. But we'll have the roof yet."

John sniffled and let his arm go gently around her.

"Betsy — forgive me. I didn't mean —"

"Why, John, dear," said Betsy, smiling again, "in a little while we will not need a house. John! 'In my Father's house are many mansions'!"

"Yes," answered John, with a caress, awed by the light in his wife's pretty face. "Yes — yes."

"Who would we leave it to when we die?"

"Just so!" cried John.

"And in the mansions our boys will be! And it will be Sunday always."

When fall came the new owners turned them out — and Betsy's dainty house-things were given to the new tenant. They went to live in the abandoned out-kitchen of a neighbor, and Betsy made John believe that she had never been quite so happy. And, from mak-

ing believe, it after a while came to be true. She cried once or twice when John was away — the little place was so bare and ugly. There did not seem any way to make a home of it. But Betsy set to work to try — with only her small hands — and occasionally John's big ones — and almost no money — and surprised herself. When it was done, she found that she had, somehow, sewn and woven her own happiness into the curtains and carpets and furniture.

It took years to do it. Yet she was happy every hour of the time.

Betsy determined, one day, to celebrate the completion of her work. So when John came home he was met by a glare of light from several borrowed lamps, the smell of flowers gathered by Betsy herself in the fields, and a "dinner!" — as Betsy proudly announced — instead of their usual supper.

John took off his old hat in the midst of it and gazed speechlessly. Then he went back — outside — and wiped again the soles of his boots on the door-mat Betsy had woven. Betsy laughed like a girl and pulled him inside.

“Come! You have got to dance!”

Well—John never could dance. But she managed to make him whirl with her dizzily through the two tiny rooms she had made.

“John! It’s beginning all over again! Going to housekeeping! I’m the little bride. You can be the groom—if you like?”

“Yes,” mused John, very happily, “beginning all over again—going to housekeeping—again. But something—is not—”

The cradle was there—they had always kept it—and John looked at that and laughed guiltily.

“Not that, John—not that, John,” cried Betsy, plunging into his arms with sobs. “Not that—not that—talk about the roof—if you like—anything—but—not—*that!*”

VIII

THE END OF LIFE IS AS ITS BEGINNING—SIMPLE

AFTERWARD life was again to them much the same. Only they learned to go more and more to the churchyard on Sundays with homely garden flowers in their hands. But, again, they were very happy. John still maintained that they were renewing their youth. Betsy retorted that it was second childhood. For there was now a quaver in John's voice which Betsy heard but never spoke of, and a tremor in Betsy's hands which John saw and never mentioned.

The next winter Betsy slipped on the ice and fell. To her surprise she could not get up again. John carried her in and went for the doctor. She had broken her thigh.

She smiled up at the physician very placidly when he shook his head.

"Doctor, you must—*must* patch me up. John needs me."

"John!" The doctor turned upon him where he slunk into a corner. John hung his head. Betsy laughed almost joyously.

It was she who answered the doctor's look.

"He couldn't git along without me."

She smiled at John, and John smiled back.

The doctor caught them at this.

"In the army?" he asked John.

"Yes," came from the corner.

"Private?"

"Captain."

"Oh! —"

He remembered him then. He turned and looked at him.

"You fought!"

John was silent. But Betsy's face glowed. It was she who answered for him. All about him and the five. It made John blush.

"Hum — wounded?"

"Yes."

"Often?"

"Three times."

"Where?"

"Leg — thigh — arm."

"That what makes you limp?"

"Guess so."

"Let me look."

John uncovered.

"Hum — why didn't you see me long ago?"

"Dunno," said John.

"Army surgeon. No charge to you."

John said nothing.

"Ever apply for a pension?"

"No."

"Why?"

"*Volunteered.*"

"Hell of a reason — hum!" ended the surgeon, turning his back to him and his face to the patient on the bed.

Presently he pulled on his gloves and started for the door. He stopped and looked at John once more.

"Bullet in leg myself. Going to patch you both up. Army surgeon. Entitled to my services. Didn't apply for pension? You and I are the only two who didn't. By."

The doctor did patch them up. But for Betsy there was to be no more work — nor any dancing. The chubby hands could only

lie quietly within each other and wither. The agile feet could not lift themselves from the floor unless John helped them.

John put away his pick and shovel.

"I'll have to learn to make baskets," said he.

Betsy raised her head from the pillow on her chair to laugh.

"Don't you think I kin?"

She looked at his hands and laughed again.

"But we'll have to try — if you're willing. We got to do something."

"Oh, I'm willing," said John, hopefully.

"John!"

Two tears started down her face. John dried them and stroked the soft, withered hands.

"Dear old John — to be my 'prentice!"

IX

GOOD BASKETS MUST KEEP THEIR BOTTOMS

It was true that his wits were dull and his hands clumsy, but there was such pleasure in the learning that John did it very rapidly. And whatever had gone before, and whatever was to come after, they were certain that no part of their lives had been happier than this of John's apprenticeship at eighty to the trade of basket-making.

But his baskets were certainly clumsy as such hands were likely to make them, and had, besides, a way of losing their handles and bottoms at critical moments, which was, at least, unfortunate.

John discovered, after a while, that every purchase was simply so much charity. And, thus far, they had lived proudly — with the wage-earner's terror of dependence. One day one of his customers told him, brutally, about the insecurity of the baskets — and John

decided at once that he must do something else.

“No, John,” said Betsy, “make baskets. But make them for play — not for use. For the school children. Their baskets do not need strong bottoms.”

John wanted to shout.

“I kin — I kin do that! They like me. The children like me.”

So John entered another phase of his strange life. And none that had preceded it had been more beautiful. The house was always full of children. And he could never be seen on the streets of the town without two or more of them clinging to his hands and the skirts of his old uniform coat. If he happened to meet them coming from school, they would flock after him to his door — one or two — very carefully chosen — to sit on either side of the little invalid’s chair and hear stories the most wonderful outside of story-books. But for the sake of old times Betsy would often have them all in — so that the little rooms were jammed with them — and then they might romp about her as they pleased till

John saw that she was tired. Then he would put them all out.

These were the best friends they ever had — the children. But as customers for his wares they were soon supplied and John was idle again. And it was winter — and there was nothing to do and John had never asked for charity and, he had often said, never would.

So there came a day when there was nothing in the house for the white little wife to eat. As for John, he could not have told exactly when he had broken his fast. They said nothing about it to each other — both understood. Betsy even tried to lighten John's grimness by a pitiful little joke. She thought it would show John how brave she was.

"A drink, John, please. There is plenty of *water*, is there not?"

"Plenty of water — yes, plenty of water!" said John, in a way that made Betsy tremble. For the first time John was terrible.

She sent him out that afternoon to hunt for work. He came back unsuccessful and with a certain wildness in his eyes.

But there was a supper for them. A stew of meat steamed on the table. John brought it and fed Betsy—wondering without question.

“You, too, John, dearest; you, too.”

Well—John was very hungry and he began to eat. Presently he noticed that Betsy was crying softly. It was a long time before she succumbed to his coaxing. But then she confessed:

“She said I ought to go to the poor-house.”

“Who?” shouted John, rising angrily.

“Mrs. Morrell, who brought the meat.”

John flung the bowl and its contents out of the window. Betsy was awed. She had never seen him like that.

“John!” she coaxed softly.

“That’s what Miller told me. God! Said I wasn’t worth nothing to work no more. I’ll show ’em—I’ll show ’em!”

But he didn’t show them—he could not. Age had come at last, and at last he knew this. He earned nothing—and their hunger went on.

And, one evening, Betsy timidly resumed the hated subject.

"I've been thinking about it, John, dear, and she meant it very kind. It is warm there, John, and there is plenty of food. John —"

"My God, Betsy, do you want to go — live on charity — do you at last want to leave me — and live on charity — do you want to separate after sixty years — and live on charity? — Oh, my God!"

"No — no — no! John, let us stay together now until — the end," said Betsy. "Forgive me. Only I'm such a burden to you — and it is so cold —"

John had another period of savage activity. It brought no work. But the agitation shattered him. He went to bed, and when he rose again his spirit was broken.

"John," said Betsy to him then, with an angelic light on her face, "when you get a little better we — will go."

John only looked stern.

"I have thought it all over — it is best."

"I will not go," said John, quietly. "I am a soldier!"

"Yes, John, dear, but —"

“Betsy,” asked John, solemnly, “do you *want* to go?”

He never knew what a hero she became before she answered:

“Yes — John — I — I want — to go. I’m so cold — and so hungry —”

“Very — well,” said John. But his hand shook so that he could not put it to his eyes.

“Just till you get right on your feet again, John, darling, just till you’re quite well. I’m such a burden to you now. We’re such a burden to each other. Just till things are better with you. That will be soon, I know it. Then, John, dear John, you shall come for me! Think of that! It will be another home-coming! Another beginning! Another bride and groom!”

John listened avidly. A new and more youthful light flashed into his face.

“Betsy — do you mean that?”

“Mean it? Every word, John, every word!”

He savagely caught her hands.

“You will come back to me?”

“No,” said Betsy, “you shall bring me back!”

X

THINGS FEEL HEAVIER IN AGE

So, one day, a farm wagon, piled high with straw and pillows, came and took her away. The last thing she said was:

“Dear John! we have lived together sixty years and you never gave me an unkind word. Kiss me! And again! Oh, it’s like ’35, ain’t it? And, John, come for me as soon as things are better with you. And if I can’t do without you that long and send for you — will you come before?”

“Yes,” said John, chokingly. It was all he could say.

Betsy kept her face toward John — then toward the house — then the tallest tree — then the steeple of the church — long after each had successively disappeared from view. Then she bravely turned it toward the poor-house.

And John watched the wagon as it climbed

hill after hill and disappeared in valley after valley till it was lost to view.

John tried his pick and shovel again. But they were thick with rust and very heavy. And the wounded doctor had just brought him a crutch — saying that as he was having one made for himself he had also had one made for John — though he could do without it. He smiled a little then and put away forever his old and faithful tools. For a living he did what he could. It was not much, and he and hunger came to be rare intimates.

But that youthful hope which Betsy's last words had wrought, and its almost savage vigor to do for her, did not depart from John.

After a while something went wrong with his head. He fancied that *she* was still with him in the little house and always had been. Her dainty old clothing was about everywhere to foster this. One night he dreamed of her — that she was by his side. The dream was so real that he reached out his arms—only to close them on the air. Then he understood for a little that it had all been but a fancy. He lay for a long time shuddering and passing

now and then his arms through the empty air — thinking that *might* have been real and this the fancy. Toward morning a wondrous thought came to him. He remembered that she had said he was to come for her. He was to bring her back. There was to be another beginning — another home-coming — another bride and groom. He did not remember the rest — that he was to wait until his affairs had improved, or until she sent for him.

He pictured it all in the vivid darkness — how he would suddenly appear before her in his Sunday clothes — which meant his best uniform — and say “Come!”

A wondrous voice echoed his own “Come!”

He flung himself out of the bed like a youth. He shaved with great care — he wore no beard and had a clean fresh face — set everything in order in the tiny rooms — pulled down the blinds, locked the door, and, taking up his crutch, started away over the road the wagon had gone to the poor-house.

He paused on the hills and looked backward as Betsy had done. The blinking windows

seemed to beckon him back. But he bravely said no to them :

“I ain’t no deserter ! I’m coming back — with her — with her. Don’t you understand ? With *her* ! Bride and groom again.”

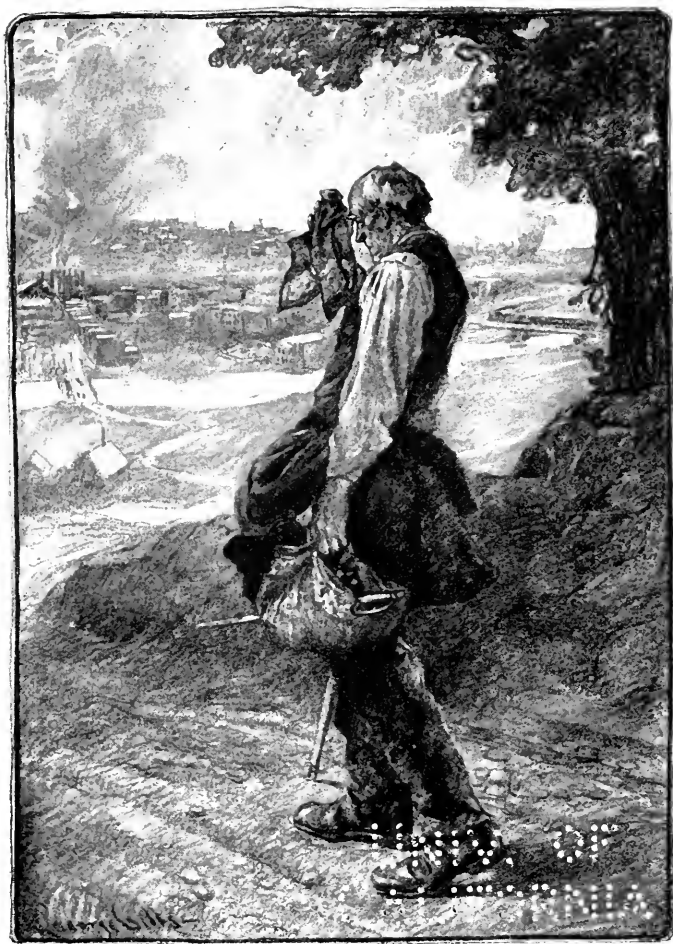
The windows seemed to understand, and stopped beckoning. He waved them a farewell and went on.

It was a long road — forty dusty miles — and hilly. Each hill growing higher and steeper as he approached the city — itself set upon a hill — where the poor-house was. His progress was very slow — sometimes not more than half a mile a day. But he never faltered.

“It’s like climbing Zion’s hill,” said John to himself. “Oh, when she sees me ! I shan’t care how many hills there were !”

His bundle was made up in a great red handkerchief, from which his sword protruded, within which was his best uniform. Farm-houses were his sleeping places — but that only. No more than one night for each, though he might have stayed anywhere as long as he wished.

“I’m going to bring her — her, you know,



“ ‘It’s like climbing Zion’s hill,’ said John to himself”



home. Bride and groom. She said it. I heard her voice in the night."

And this was always sufficient reason for refusing the dear, insidious hospitality pressed everywhere upon him.

If night came and there was no farm-house near, he would nestle in the straw of a way-side stack, under the stars, damp with the dew, to rise with the sun in his face. He liked that, and could go on without breakfast. It was all very beautiful.

His great climax grew upon him mile by mile, until it was the only thing he had in his poor old head.

"She will be sitting this way — with her hands in her lap, like she always sits now," he would say to himself, "thinking of me. I expect she's thinking of me all the time. I'll shave and put on my uniform and my sword, and suddenly appear before her. Attention! — you know. Only I'll not *say* that — so's not to frighten her. Mebby she'll be reading her Bible. Then she'll not see me till I'm right on top of her. Then I'll say, soft, so's not to frighten her — about this a — way —

‘B—E—T—S—Y!’” He whispered it lovingly. “And she’ll just say ‘*John!*’” This was a sharp cry of joy.

He never got further than this. It did not seem necessary. What could be better? What could be beyond that?

His journey came to an end suddenly — as it seemed to John. It made him gulp on something in his throat. One morning the spires of the city lay close before him as if they had been conjured out of a dream. There it was against the pink clouds, within the morning mists, glowing, like the City of God as he had fancied it. He stood and gazed upon it, awed and bewildered. He had not thought of it as beautiful. To him it was only the city of the poor-house. Perhaps Betsy would not wish to leave a place so beautiful.

He bravely cast out the unworthy thought. She would leave any place for him. Heaven itself. With his faith renewed he went up into the city of the spires.

XI

BUT THE POOR-HOUSE MAY BE ONE OF THE MANSIONS IN OUR FATHER'S HOUSE

AND there he found the first unkindness of his long journey. No one offered him a place to sleep or a bite to eat. And there he could not see the sun when it rose in the morning. And what had become of the glories of the city he had seen against the clouds? This one was not glorious.

On the third day he found the poor-house. It was a splendid building on the top of a hill. Before he quite reached it he did as he had planned. There was a beautiful wood back of the place. Here, under the trees, he shaved and put on his uniform. There was a spot of rust on the sword. He smiled as he thought how Betsy would have chided him for that. He found some soft earth and rubbed it off. The old clothing, and everything else, he put back into the red handkerchief and hid the bundle

under the roots of the tree. Then he marched up to the great and beautiful door — without his crutch — every inch a soldier once more.

A uniformed official led him in, and at last he was in the presence of his wife. She was dead. Her hands were folded within each other as he himself had often folded them. There were — on head and breast — the dainty cap and kerchief which she herself had long provided against her burial. On her dear face was the peace that passeth understanding. Indeed, she smiled up at him as he looked.

Then John's heart stopped. At Betsy's side he died. And so quietly that they who stood near never heard the sound of his gentle old voice.

They sleep together — Betsy and John. Not at Saint Michael's with their five boys. Of them nothing was known at the poor-house. Their graves are in the burying-ground of the poor. There is a cheap stone upon which somebody has carved only their names and this text :

“IN MY FATHER'S HOUSE ARE MANY
MANSIONS ”

because Betsy's Bible, when they took it up, fell open at that scripture—and her trembling finger had deeply marked the words as it followed them day after day to aid her dimming sight.

THE SIREN

THE SIREN¹

I

BRASSID

THEY tell yet, on the porches of the Crazy-Quilt House, — though it is two years, — how savage Brassid met the laughing Sea-Lady, and how, at last, he adored her laughter more the more she laughed at him, and how she loved his savagery more the more savage he was to her.

And, then, on to the consequences of that laughter and that savagery, which you are to know at the end.

Mrs. Mouthon — the lady who uses snuff — insists that it was all pretence: that Brassid was *not* savage — in his room, and that Miss Princeps never laughed — in her room. Mrs. Mouthon's room was between theirs.

Nevertheless, Miss Carat, who has the one deaf ear, contends that it is absurd, absolutely absurd. For, she argues, why *should* they

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have pretended, in the first place, and why should they *not*, if they had liked, in the last place? But, then, Miss Carat, the other five first-class boarders whisper, always opposes anything which proceeds from Mrs. Mouthon.

It seems that Brassid, weary and seeking seclusion, arrived on the last train of a Wednesday night. The man who carried his bag up from the little station told him that the Crazy-Quilt House was a sanatorium for women with head-trouble. It appeared that Brassid and the porter, who was also many other things at the hotel, would be the only men in the house—a state of affairs which immediately created a subtle camaraderie between the two men, though the porter was colored.

“Call me in time for the first train up to-morrow morning,” said Brassid, as the friendly porter dragged himself out of his room.

“It goes at six o’clock, sir,” warned the porter, perhaps wishing to detain him a little longer, for already the porter liked Brassid amazingly. Did I mention that every one did this, in spite of his ferocity?

“No matter,” said Brassid, shivering at the thought of the unearthly hour — and of the ladies with head-trouble — Brassid, who composed poems in bed until ten in the morning!

“All right, sir,” said the porter, as if warning Brassid that he would regret it.

However, that was why Brassid appeared at the dinner-table in a dinner-coat — because he knew that the invalid ladies would be there — and that thus it would be easier for him.

There were six, and one vacant place — opposite. The lady on his left put up her lorgnon in haste. The one at the top of the table put something like a pepper-box into her ear and leaned to listen.

“Lovely weather!” said Brassid.

“Rheumatic weather!” said the lady with the pepper-box.

“It’s no such thing!” said the lady who took snuff. “It’s asthmatic!”

Something dropped with a small clatter into Brassid’s plate. The lady on his left flung her lorgnon to her eyes. Miss Carat jammed her pepper-box to her ear. Some one laughed, then checked it.

An old locket, in the fashion of a heart, lay in Brassid's plate. A bit of ribbon gave evidence of some severed attachment. Brassid was hopelessly fitting back to its place a flake of blue enamel.

He tried to discourage the interest in his keepsake by covering it with his napkin. Then he looked up. The vacant seat was occupied, and the lady was trying to smother her laughter.

Brassid got red and crunched the napkin in a way which said plainly, "So it was *you* who laughed!"

She did it again.

He restored the piece of napery with a brave nonchalance, and took up the locket.

The lady's eyes retorted as plainly as her lips could have done, "Too late!"

He remembered precisely how they did it, — out of the tops of their firm white lids, — with a movement which was personal, a fascination which was irresistible. He was to read other speeches of these eyes, often repeated. But he was to read this one only once more.

Well, Brassid broke his guard and laughed with her.

"It is no laughing matter," said the lady with the lorgnon, fixing the lady who had laughed with its stare.

It was a critical moment: the lady who laughed might have retorted. But nothing further happened — except to Brassid. He was falling in love.

"I think it is," he said in her defence. And he said it with all Brassid's savagery.

"Oh, well, it's *your* souvenir," said Mrs. Mouthon, odiously.

"It is," said Brassid.

He sprung the little case open and showed them a savage face much like his own. But there was a uniform with a high collar.

"My grandfather, the Indian-fighter. I wear it around my neck."

And the lady opposite guiltily put her head down, permitting Brassid to see the loveliest of blond crowns, and, now and then, the edge of her smile; again, almost a laugh.

And so Brassid fell in love.

They cross-examined him with the pre-

cision and directness of barristers. He informed them that he came from the city, and who his parents were, and their parents, and theirs, all of whom seemed to be known to some of the six. The lady opposite kept her head down, but the smile came and went, nearer and nearer to laughter.

“Do you intend making some stay with us, sir?” inquired the lady with the one deaf ear.

“It is quite possible,” said Brassid, and the lady opposite barely restrained her inclination to look up. “It is such a delightful little place, and the swimming must be fine.”

Now Miss Princeps did look up. She seemed a little startled, and, then, did Brassid detect a bit of pleasure for her in his announcement? At the same moment all of the six looked toward Miss Princeps and detected her. Perhaps they more than detected her.

“Bill” (that was the porter) “said that you were going up on the morning train.”

Brassid laughed.

“Do you, then, swim?” asked Mrs. Mouthon.

"I am a very good swimmer," declared Brassid.

Again Miss Princeps looked up, sharply now, not caring that the six again stared at her. She inspected Brassid with some care. She seemed satisfied.

"Miss Princeps swims," said Miss Carat.

Now the eyes of the lady opposite met the eyes of Brassid in a frank stare. Brassid blushed, as we do when we think we have overstated our accomplishments in the presence of some one who knows.

"There is nothing the matter with her," one of the invalids said, referring to head-troubles, and Brassid answered with tremendous conviction :

"No !"

Before the meal was over the lady with the pepper-box asked Brassid's first name, and formally presented him, including the lady opposite. But it was only as she rose to go and swept the table with a little smiling bow that Brassid really saw her superbness.

When she had left the room he found himself still on his feet staring out of the door

whence she had vanished. They caught him in a sigh.

"Sit down!" commanded the lady who took snuff.

And they kept Brassid there and bullied him till he wanted to get up and fight the lot of them man-fashion.

They informed him severally that she was an actress; that she was a widow with a deformed child of which she was ashamed; that she was a deserted wife; that she had once been married to a very wicked man of title; that she was "strange" — sat for hours on the beach alone, sang, swam, walked, did everything but flock with them.

"God bless her!" said Brassid.

The lady who snuffed arose.

"Lord help *you*!" she said grimly.

"Eh?" said Brassid.

"What were those women who lured a man into a cave and made a swine of him?"

Her appeal was to Brassid.

"I suppose you mean the sirens."

"Yes, that was their name. That woman is a siren!"

“And you’re in love with her!” charged the lady who was deaf, in a thick voice.

“In love!” laughed Brassid. “Ha, ha, ha!”

“Yes, ha, ha, ha!” mimicked the lady who snuffed.

“I never saw her till to-day,” said Brassid.

“Neither did that other man see the sirens until he passed them on his way home.”

This convicted him before the six.

And, in the solitude of his room, it went far toward convicting him before himself, though he still laughed his hollow ha, ha, ha!

“Love at first sight! You! Old Brassid! Ha, ha, ha!”

He was speaking to the gentleman who faced him in the mirror.

At that moment she passed his door. She was softly singing:

“They sailed away
In a gallant bark.”

He had seen her but once, yet he knew the rustle of her silken skirts!

The next morning at ten Brassid was composing poems in bed, quite as he did at home

—about her! He hummed and sang the things he fetched from within in a fashion which lent color to Mrs. Mouthon's theory.

Some one knocked on his door.

"Come in!" sang Brassid, happily.

But it was only the colored porter.

He was winking his eyes rapidly, fancying that in that way he looked penitent while he did not feel so. The rumor of Brassid's infatuation had reached the porter.

"I'm sorry, sir," said the porter.

"Oh! What for, Bill?" So, suddenly had their comradeship grown to first names! "Everybody is sorry now and then. Brace up!"

The porter stared.

"The six-o'clock train, sir."

Now Brassid stared.

"I forgot it, sir."

"Thank you," said Brassid, and he gave the porter a dollar for forgetting the six-o'clock train! He had forgotten it more than the porter.

II

ON THE BOTTOM OF THE SEA

THEY met more formally, presently, on the bottom of the sea. Brassid plunged in the moment he arrived at the surf, and went out and under with a long, strong push. He saw a face on the bottom. It stared uncannily up at him through the wavering green water. Brassid followed it and dragged it breathlessly to the surface. There she laughed at him.

"I — I — thought you were d-dead!" gasped Brassid.

"Not at all," smiled the Sea-Lady.

"Why, how long were you under?"

"Not long."

"It seemed as if you had been there all day!"

"*My* grandfather was a whaler," said the Sea-Lady, winking the water out of her eyes solemnly, as if that explained her.

"*My* grandfather was an Indian-fighter,"

cried Brassid, joyously, which was his way of saying that the one was as intelligible as the other.

Her laughter broke loose.

"Look at me!" commanded Brassid, suddenly, with that savagery which he had from his grandfather. "You are shamming—and doing it beautifully. You *were* in distress down there! And if I hadn't come along—"

But by that time she was doing exactly what Brassid had asked—looking at him with the most wonderful eyes of blue Brassid had seen since his mother died. Brassid funkcd ingloriously. Think of it!

"The lady with the lorgnon has seen us, and is coming," she warned.

"Yes!"

He was frightened, too.

"Let us swim a little."

"Yes."

They plunged in.

"Be careful," said Brassid.

"*My* grandfather was a whaler," she laughed back as she raced away to sea.

"Oh, you *can* swim!" he exclaimed joyously.

"Can *you*?" she laughed.

"A little," he answered — more carefully now.

"Come!"

After that she admitted Brassid to a precarious intimacy, based upon swimming. In the sea she was everything Brassid could wish. On the land she was not.

"She's like a fish out of water," jested the lady who took snuff.

"Do not be discouraged," shouted she of the pepper-box. "I do not think she knows yet that you're courting her."

All the ladies cackled.

"Who said I was courting her?" demanded Brassid, with ferocity.

The ladies laughed again. And when Miss Princeps came down they surrounded her and told her Brassid's delightful joke.

"I've warned him," said one, "that you're a siren — one of those ladies who —"

Well, it was his first comradeship, and it

happened to be an extraordinarily perfect one. It was so very blessed that, to use the words of Mrs. Paradigm (she was the lady with the lorgnon), he went crazy over it. And perhaps if you had known Brassid's Sea-Lady, you would not have wondered — you might have commended him for going crazy. You remember that she had the eyes of Brassid's blessed mother.

"I never hoped to see them on earth again," he said to the face in the mirror.

Oh, she was rich and splendid and fragrant and melodious — I am using Brassid's book of adjectives — and altogether more lovely in every detail of herself than any one else on earth! And he had constantly the ecstatic feeling that he had discovered her, really; but he never did. For the Sea-Lady was unlike any one he had ever known. He literally knew that she was wonderful in every way that a lover could wish a sweetheart to be wonderful, yet there was not a single admission to go upon. Whenever she caught herself showing Brassid her heart, — and she would have been fond of showing this to

Brassid if he had been a woman, perhaps, — she went to cover — and asked him to swim ! And I am glad to think that that is the only reason he never saw her heart — never really discovered her.

Until that last day — that second time the eyes said, “Too late !”

And of that I am now to tell you.

III

SHE MAY HAVE HAD BROTHERS

"By Jove!" said Brassid, that day, as he watched her conquest of the choppy waves, "you *are* something nautical! I *do* believe that your ancestors wore scales!"

"Oh, Brassid! Thank you! Think of having such a crest as that! Eight carp gules! And the nearest I can come to it is the whaler! Brassid, in the sea I almost love you! And when you really begin to 'court' me and feel that you must propose, do it in the water, to the diapason of the waves, in the sight and hearing of my scaly relatives!"

"Hanged if I do!" said Brassid. "You have got to hear that; but it will be in your own house."

"In evening dress?"

"Very likely."

"On your knees?"

“On my knees.”

“Horrid, Brassid!”

“It is your fate.”

“But why, Brassid? Why must it be? Isn’t this lovely enough?” Miss Princeps mourned.

“Because I love you,” said he, stoutly.

“But, Brassid dear, that’s no reason.”

“It is. Every man who loves a woman *must* propose to her — if for no other reason than to be rejected. Then and then only he will see his finish. And I won’t see *mine* even then. And, to show you that you like me very much, at least, let me remind you that you quite unconsciously called me ‘dear’ just now.”

“Brassid, my grandfather was a whaler.”

“Well, what on earth has that to do with it?”

“I don’t know.”

“You love me — that’s what it means.”

“Oh!”

“Yes!”

“I may have brothers — whom I call dear — and — so — get used to it —”

“Have you?” demanded Brassid, with the ferocity that came and went so quickly.

“No, sir,” she answered obediently.

“Oh, you are the most delicious being on earth!” laughed he. “And I won’t wait till we get to town!”

But Brassid had forgotten to tread, and got a generous mouthful of salt water.

“Brassid,” wailed the lady, “I’m sorry for you; but you are punished for taking advantage of me at a time and in an element when I almost love you.”

“Don’t you dare to pity me! I’m not done with you!” spluttered Brassid. “This is my chance — you said it — in — the — sea.”

“In fun! Only in fun!” she cried. “Can’t you see a joke?”

Before he got his chance she said:

“Brassid, we are far enough. You are tired. Let us go back.”

“I won’t!”

“Why?”

“You are mine out here. I am going to keep you — out here.”

“Would you come and live with me in the

Dragon King's palace beneath the sea, where it is always wet?"

"Yes. Whither thou goest I will go."

"Brassid, I am going home. You will not be restrained."

"And I'll follow you. The only way to get rid of me is to marry me."

"Then I will never, never marry you, Brassid," said the Sea-Lady, leaving him that riddle, which he never solved. For it was the last day, and presently it would be the second time that her eyes of blue had said, "Too late!"

IV

BUT SHE WAS BEST OF ALL

SHE pulled him out of the water, and they bathed in the sun. Not a ship sailed the sea.

His voice spoke first, as if he dreamed — a fragment — “But you are best of all!”

She looked up and found his eyes upon her. With her own she questioned him.

“Nothing is in sight, nothing can be heard, but what God has made. This!” He waved his hand at the immaculate sky. “That!” The limitless sea. “The earth!” He pointed where it stretched away from them to the vanishing-point. “You!”

“No — you!” she laughed.

“And it is all good. God alone knows how good. *But*,” he repeated, while his gaze was fixed upon her upturned face, “you are best of all!”

She kept her eyes upon him in wonder; for

if he had not solved the Sea-Lady, she had not solved him. And this was very strange from savage Brassid.

"Yes; God made nothing so perfect as a perfect woman — *you!*"

"You think *me* perfect?"

"Yes."

"Oh, Brassid!"

But something clanged in her brain.

"I love you!"

"Don't, Brassid!" she begged. "You have touched to-day what you have never touched before, what no one has — don't!"

It was a mighty occasion; but she would not have it. She fought it with her best weapon — levity. She laughed. She made him laugh, and it was done.

"Oh, Brassid," she sighed, "forgive me! But it is too lovely. And afterward we could not swim together any more."

"Why not?"

"Why, Brassid! Who ever heard of a rejected lover taking the same walks with his late beloved under the same trees by the light of the same moon?"

"Walks?" questioned Brassid, dully.

"Our swims are the same as walks to other lo —"

"Aha!" cried Brassid, "you almost said 'lovers'!"

"Did I? How stupid of me!"

"Do you mean to say that you absolutely and positively refuse me?" shouted he, belligerently.

"Certainly not, my dear Brassid," she hurried forth. "I can't refuse what you haven't offered. And, dear Brassid," she went on caressingly, "I know that you won't offer — because — because —"

"Out with it!" cried Brassid, still in his ferocity.

"Because I like you so — to swim with!"

"And when there is no swimming?"

"No Brassid —"

"I tell you there will be!" he threatened.

"Well, I'm glad to hear it; for I shouldn't like this world so well without its Brassid — since I know him. But, Brassid dear, — there! the whaler again! — why *must* you *marry* me?"

“Because it’s every woman’s business to be married.”

“But not every man’s, then? So that I might marry some one else, and not bother you with —”

“That is just the trouble!” cried the savage in him again. “You *will* marry some one else if I let you get away from me.”

“As if I were game!”

“You are. The noblest game on earth.”

“Brassid!”

“Yes. You couldn’t go long uncaptured. How have you escaped? All the men you knew must have been blind, deaf, dumb.”

“Ah, well,” Miss Princeps sighed, “if one *must* be married some time or other, thank God that there are Brassids! But who ever heard of two married people swimming together!”

“We will,” still threatened Brassid.

“We?”

“Yes, we.”

“It doesn’t sound badly, Brassid.”

“Now that’s better. For you know that, though I’m a poor enough sort, no one has

ever adored you as I do, and that you — yes, you — were never such a comrade with any one else.”

“Why, Brassid !”

“Isn’t it so ? Answer me !”

“Yes, sir,” she said.

They laughed together.

“Please don’t be cross, Brassid dear, just because I can’t marry you ! I’ll keep *on* calling you ‘dear’ if you won’t.”

V

HIS GRANDFATHER'S COURAGE MADE HER WANT TO LOVE HIM

IN the sea again, whither she dragged him after that, far from land, as they looked back at the people on the beach :

“Before you came,” laughed the girl, “I had all the fun to myself. They would follow me with their glasses, expecting me to throw up my arms and call for help. The hotel man actually bought a rope with straps and buckles and things on the end to save me. They used to bring it down every time I went in. Now Bill uses it to pull the trunks up. And no one ever minds us. See, not a soul is looking this way ! Brassid, it was lovely of you to come. You are ” — she laughed, and by a deft stroke came so close as to touch him — “both my chaperon and palladium. Of course I suppose if we should ever get into trouble I would have to save you. My grandfather was a whaler. But back there they have the most

beautiful confidence in you, just because you are a man. I am not pleased with you in that, Brassid. It is false pretence. I shall let you save yourself — remember.”

“I wouldn’t allow you to save me.”

“What! You ungrateful — Brassid! I can swim twice as far as you can. But I’m glad to hear that.”

“When I was taught to swim, my teacher dinned into my ears that I was never to forget when I went out that I had to come back. See?”

For reply she raced away from him.

“My grandfather was a whaler. I wasn’t taught to go back.”

He followed as lustily until he had caught her. They laughed splendidly.

“*My* grandfather,” he laughed, “the Virginia ranger, you remember, was too proud to call for help when he fought his last fight within a hundred yards of the pickets of his own regiment.”

“Brassid, I love that!” she cried breathlessly, going to his side. “What happened to him?”

"He was killed. But when they found him he had five dead Indians to his credit, while his hands were clutched upon the throat of another."

"That's why you adore him, isn't it? Otherwise you would probably never have heard of him. That is what makes us live in the memories of those who love us — just that one little thing, courage!"

"No. There is another and greater thing," said Brassid.

She looked up in her questioning way.

He smiled affectionately.

"Love," said Brassid.

She shook her head:

"Courage."

"Love," he insisted.

"Let us put them both together," she said, "courage and love."

"Love and courage," he acquiesced.

"You for love, I for courage."

Brassid watched her glowing young face and her strong young arms, as they struck out, in a new wonder. He had not yet solved the lovely Sea-Lady.

She went on with dilated nostrils :

“ Say, Brassid, that makes me *want* to love you. An ancestor like that! Oh, it beats the whaler! That’s why I speak so often of him. It needed courage to be a whaler. Brassid, you never were so near winning me — isn’t that what you men call it? — as right now. Go on, Brassid, about your Indian-fighter!”

“ My grandfather probably would have won you,” sighed Brassid.

“ No; you. You are like him. I knew it from the first. Why didn’t you tell me that at first? You would do as he did — if there were Indians.”

“ And what would you do?”

“ As your grandfather did, Brassid — if there were Indians.”

He retreated a little from her.

“ Maybe I do *love love* a little, Brassid dear; but I *adore* the courage that dies without weakening — rather than weaken. I can’t help it. It was born in me. I wouldn’t do it. And if your grandfather had called for help, I should have hated him — and you,” she laughed.

And, after a silence, she said again, as if that was what she had been thinking about :

“Brassid, I love courage more than love.”

And again :

“Brassid, your name *is* Courage.”

VI

HER ANCESTORS WORE SCALES

"FOR immediate evidence of my pusillanimity," laughed Brassid, "let us return. We have never been half so far as this. And while you are a mermaiden, I am only a walrus."

"*Must* we go back?"

"No," laughed Brassid.

"Then let us go on and on and on forever! Brassid, I am mad to-day. That about the Indian-fighter did it. And if you knew how close — close — you are — why — come! Out there where it sparkles! It fascinates — calls to me. Oh, dear Brassid, perhaps my ancestors *did* wear scales! Come! Out there ask for — anything!"

She gave him, there in the water, his first caress — only a touch, after all.

Brassid's tongue was loosed. He talked on almost in strophes.

And she answered presently :

“Brassid dear, that sounds like the big love. I wouldn’t have any other — if I had to have it at all. I wish I did love you. Oh, not so much for your sake as mine ! I begin to feel, to see, to hear, what it is. Brassid, some day I shall demand it.”

“And you shall have it.”

“But not — now — Brassid dear ! Not — to-day ! *Please !*”

“Look here,” said he, in his ferocity, “you do love me — and you are going to marry me !”

“No, no, no ! Brassid, really, I don’t love you. Not a bit — yet. It is courage — courage. But out here — to-day — Brassid, I like you — courage or no courage, I’ll confess that much — I like you a lot.” Then, presently, “Brassid, do you really think I love you ?”

He nodded.

“Why don’t you speak ? It is very impolite to nod a reply to such an important — question. I can’t — marry — you — away — out — here.”

They faced each other, and knew that they were out of breath.

"Out there is a bar. I have been watching it. We can rest there."

But Brassid did not touch her to help.

Presently they reached it. Neither could have gone twenty yards further. Brassid turned and looked shoreward. Something suddenly gripped his heart. The Crazy-Quilt House was a distant blur against the horizon. There were people on the beach, but they were as ants. He kept her face seaward. A ship, hull down, was sailing from them.

"And presently, when we are quite rested, we shall go home."

"I suppose so," she said petulantly. "But, oh, it has been *so* lovely to-day!"

"But I am hungry."

"Yes. Come."

Once more he kept her eyes seaward by pointing out that the ship was coming about.

"Brassid," she laughed, "to-morrow we shall go out to that ship!"

"Yes," he smiled.

She had come very close to him. She was dancing on her toes upon the bar. The tide was running in rapidly. The sun was overhead in all its September glory. She held by his arms and danced. Her hair was confined under a pale-green scarf, save where it escaped. Below in the green water he could see her loveliness foreshortened.

"Brassid, you are staring at me. Do you see the scales?"

"Why are you so quiet — now?"

"Brassid, I can touch bottom no longer. See! I *must* be in your arms! That is my only excuse—I am tired. Aha!"

She laughed gloriously.

"Brassid — dear — good — luck — to — you!" she whispered.

He kissed her.

"Brassid, what does that mean?"

"That you are engaged to me —"

"Brassid, I don't mind being engaged — that much — out here —"

He kissed her again.

"Yes," she said. "But remember that I

do not love you, and that I shall never marry you. It will be quite different when we land. I heard the snuff lady say that we must be engaged, or it would be very improper to be so much alone — out — here. So now you may tell her that — we — are engaged — that everything is proper — and you needn't say that it is only a little."

She stopped to laugh again.

"Oh, Brassid, it is glorious! And you are lovely. And I have everything I want now — since we are engaged a little. And if I ever marry any one it will be some one just like you, who can swim, and has the big love — and courage. But I won't love *you*, Brassid, I won't. You should not expect *that*."

"No," laughed happy Brassid.

"Kiss me!" she commanded. "And laugh!"

Brassid did both.

VII

STRANGE THAT LOVE SHOULD MAKE ONE AFRAID

THE fierce inrush of a wave swept him from his feet. She spun around with a little cry. Then she saw what Brassid had seen and had kept from her. Fear touched the heart which had never feared before.

"Brassid," she whispered, "I did not know that we had come so far!"

Brassid tried to laugh.

"The tide will help us."

"Brassid, you kept me here — you kept me from looking — so that I might rest — and be — strong?"

"I kept you here," said Brassid, "to make you mine."

"Brassid," she whispered, "why did you do so splendid a thing? Dreadful, too! I am afraid to drown now. I wasn't before."

"Why are you afraid now?"

"Because then I should never see *you* again. That is what made the little fear you saw. It all came in a flash. I know. But I am not — afraid — not now."

"Not now! My love!"

But he saw that panic had followed fear, that every nerve had slackened, that every muscle was unstrung. She swam, panting now, — he had never seen her do that, — and for a while conquered fear. She kept at his side. Now and then she touched him, and always she watched him piteously.

"Brassid — you are stronger — than I thought — stronger than I — as a man ought to be. I am — glad."

"Yes," gasped Brassid, "I am strong — and you are brave —"

"Brassid, I don't mind being saved by you."

"I should think not."

"We will not forget the — Indian-fighter — Brassid."

"Nor the whaler."

"Yes; I want to live — to be — your — wife — Brassid."

“My wife!”

Then was silence; nothing but the beating of their breath.

“Brassid — dear — if we do not — get home — stay with me! I do not want — to — stay out here — alone! Oh! Alone! Brassid — will you — stay with me — no — matter — no matter — ”

“No matter — what!”

Perhaps it was wrong to say that. But his love was what he had called it — the big love. She gave up.

“Then — beloved — if you — will stay — with — me — ”

She could even smile at him.

“The Indian-fighter — the whaler!” pleaded Brassid.

“Yes.”

She responded, and again and again responded. But he saw her first stroke fail. Each of his own cost what seemed a life.

“I am too — tired — Brassid.”

“Courage!” gasped Brassid.

“Yes; once more. To be your wife!”

They swam silently.

“Brassid — I am thinking — of all the dear things you — said. I didn’t notice some of them then. But now — as the drowning do — they are all — very — sweet.”

“You are not drowning,” said Brassid, with his last ferocity.

“It is so strange — that love — should make — one — afraid ! I never was — afraid — until I loved you — Brassid — Brassid ! Until I — loved — you !”

Brassid put his arm under her to float her. As he did so she sank away from him.

“Can’t — Brassid — dear,” she whispered. “I — am — too — tired — too — tired —”

He saw the dear face with the green water between them. The sun made it glorious — piteous.

“Too late !” said the eyes, as they had said it that first night — he could read it now as plainly as then. And another smile, as then. Her eyes kept upon him. She was quite still. Her arms opened to him. They closed about him, and once more Brassid followed the lovely Sea-Lady to the bottom.

THE LOADED GUN

THE LOADED GUN¹

I

THREE GENTLEMEN OF PHILADELPHIA

AT three o'clock in the morning, Gast, McGill, and Ravant were going down Twentieth street, in the vicinity of Walnut street. They were locked together in the fashion of a Roman phalanx. And even then their going was unsteady. With the memory of his classical studies somewhat revived, Ravant repeated Cæsar's commendation of the Roman formation.

A little later, and a little further down the street, where lived many of the city's elect, they were protesting in over-vociferous melody that they would not go home till morning.

"Make it midday, for the sake of ver-simili-tude," begged Gast, breathless with the word, "for it is morning now. Behold!"

And thereupon he also remembered the in-

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vocations to the rising sun, in which the ancients abound, and produced one — according to his memory :

“Aurora leaped upon the nether hills
And flung a kiss to Bacchus — ’twas a day !”

The officer on the corner of the square came and looked on amicably.

His applause made McGill realize that the voices of his comrades, unlike his own, had never excelled in melody. He, therefore, attached himself to a lamp-post, and, in the fashion of a precentor, proposed to instruct them in the difficulties of “Annie Laurie.”

But, in attaching himself to the lamp-post, he had detached himself from the critical right of the phalanx, which now floundered dismally and then incontinently disintegrated. The officer of the peace secured Ravant and Gast and anchored them to McGill — and “Annie Laurie” went terribly on.

It would have been hard enough to endure if it had not been mixed with liquors. But since it was so mixed it was not wonderful that anathema was belched at them from the win-

dows of that halcyon neighborhood, and that they were then slammed violently shut.

But they were hardly prepared for a gunshot in their direction.

"That's right," complained McGill; "if you can't reform 'em, shoot 'em!"

"Mac, that man's a pil-os-per," argued Gast. "For, lo! these many years the sovereign people have sought a cure for the drink evil. Well, he has found it. Shoot 'em. Eh, Ravey?"

Ravant said nothing. And now they awoke to the understanding that he had grown heavy between them.

A cab passed. The driver, an experienced nighthawker, drew up to them.

"Right this time," said Gast. "This jag is going home imperially in a cab. It'll be about all I'll be able to do to walk my own to my happy home."

The officer assisted in getting Ravant into the cab.

But suddenly his manner changed to savagery. They were under the direct light of the corner electric.

"Which of you did this?" he demanded.

Blood slowly trickled from a wound in Ravant's head.

Gast had a drunken inspiration.

"That gun!" he whispered.

The officer caught upon this.

"Where was it fired from?"

This none of them in the least knew.

The officer took McGill and Gast to the station-house, where they were ignominiously searched. Ravant went to the hospital in a cab.

Presently, in a lucid interval, Ravant signed an affidavit setting forth that it was neither McGill nor Gast who had fired the shot. Upon this his two companions were released "under surveillance."

And this was so odious to Gast that he swore to find out who it was had fired the shot.

II

AN OUNCE OF WHISKEY OR AN OUNCE OF BRAINS

THE moment Ravant awoke to sanity at the hospital he demanded a drink of whiskey.

"The doctor has forbidden it," said the nurse.

"Why?" shouted Ravant.

"Your head. He thinks it would take you much longer to get well—perhaps prevent your recovery altogether."

"Call him!" Still in Ravant's terrible voice. "I guess it's my own head. And if I'd rather have an ounce of whiskey—more or less—than an ounce of brains—more or less—it's my business and none of his."

The little, frightened nurse did what he asked, and Ravant said to the doctor very much what he had said to the nurse. And the doctor answered him precisely what the nurse had answered.

"But," he laughed in addition, "your head is certainly your own, and you are certainly sane enough to decide what you want done with it, though it is rather contrary to Dungleison's ethics to let you. It doesn't matter greatly either way, though. How much are you in the habit of taking?"

"All I can buy," snarled Ravant.

The doctor laughed again and wrote a prescription for an ounce of whiskey.

"You don't care whether I live or die, do you?" asked Ravant, odiously.

"Oh, quite as much as you do!" answered the doctor, with a certain jolly contempt for such a man. Then, to the nurse:

"I don't think it will be necessary for me to see your patient again. Take care that he gets all he needs. My original instructions will do till he is discharged."

"You don't care either," challenged Ravant, when the doctor had gone.

"Yes — I care — very much," said the brave little nurse.

Ravant stared, then said:

"Well — hurry that whiskey here!"

And, presently, she brought it. Ravant saw only the hand which offered it to his famished soul. It trembled. As he took the glass he followed the arm up to the nurse's face. That was very pale. When she was certain that he would drink it, she gasped and then choked down a bit of a sob.

"Now, what's the matter with you?" cried Ravant, with brutal irritation.

"Noth — nothing," faltered the nurse.

"You lie," said Ravant. "I told you that it is my own head. Why don't you want me to drink it?"

"Drink it!" begged the nurse, now in terror of him. "Please do!"

"I won't! You're both too dam' anxious!"

He flung the frail glass against the wall, where it was broken. Then he turned his back upon the nurse, and, gripping the iron rods of his bed, bent them until they doubled and parted. He slept a little presently — breathing like a wounded beast. When he woke the little nurse was wiping up the spilled liquor. The terrible fragrance infested his very soul.

“Open the window!” Ravant shouted.
“You are torturing me!”

The girl did this.

“Why did you make me smell the dam’ stuff?”

Then, a little more gently, before she could answer:

“Thank you. I can’t stand the smell of it — not the smell.”

The nurse laid a brave hand on his.

“I guess you’re the right sort,” he said hoarsely. “Put it there!”

He gripped the hand of the nurse as he would have done that of a man.

Afterward Ravant watched the girl as she “went about doing good” for him — as he giped it. She tried to keep out of his vision.

“What in the devil are you about?” he commanded. “I want to look at you! It does me good — to look at you!”

She came, with a pink face, where he could see her.

“If it does you good — why, look at me!”

She tried to do it lightly — pose there — but her bosom heaved. Ravant saw this.



“‘I guess you’re the right sort,’ he said hoarsely. ‘Put it there!’”

“Yes, I’ve stopped guessing. You *are* the right sort — inside. And you’re not half as ugly outside as I thought you at first. Or else you’ve grown prettier. I think it’s that. I suppose they make it a point to hire only ugly girls for nurses. Else the patients would marry ’em as fast as they could gather ’em in, and there would never be any nurses. But you’ve fooled ’em! Look in the glass!”

It was useless to resist what had now become affectionate brutality, and she did this. It was true that there was a glow in her hollow cheeks.

“Thank you!”

“By the Lord, you nearly laughed!” said Ravant, with entire seriousness. “Say — I’m going to like you. And I want you to try to like me. If I ever ask for whiskey again, don’t you give it to me, no matter if I curse you up hill and down dale. And I’ll try not to ask for it.”

The nurse stopped something which would have been a sob at maturity.

“But for God’s sake, don’t cry,” Ravant

went on. "I hate women who cry. And I'm not hating you—I see that already."

"I will not cry!" pledged the nurse.

"I believe you," said Ravant. "Put it there. I won't drink!"

And for the second time they shook hands.

III

CALLING A MAN A PIG

"AND yet," mused Ravant, "I make you cry!"

There was an unwonted softness in his voice.

"I'm sorry I'm such a brute—I *am* a good deal of a brute—ain't I?"

When she did not answer he shouted at her suddenly:

"Ain't I?"

"Yes," said the frightened nurse.

"And I'm a pig, too. That's what the doctor called me the other day when he left, didn't he?"

"Yes."

"I heard him. And he's right, too—though not so bully as you, at saying it."

"The doctor is mistaken," braved the girl.
"I wouldn't say it."

Ravant gasped and sat up in bed.

"*What?*"

The girl repeated, without fear, what she had said.

And nothing had ever cowed Ravant as that did. It made him stop and think. It seemed as if he had never thought before — so primitive were his processes.

“I’ll just live up to that girl’s estimate of me — and fool her. I really thought I was a pig. Heavens!” He laughed with himself as if he were some one else. “It didn’t even offend me! But I’m glad I’m not a pig — to her — and I’ll stop being a brute. Especially to women. What was it mother used to say?”

Finally he remembered it:

“Always be gentle to all women. For some of them are mothers, and all of them are daughters of mothers.”

He said to himself that he had better write that out in a plain hand and paste it in his hat. Then he said he would go the hat one better — he would write it out and paste it in his head.

And I think he did this in some fashion. For he often remembered it. And at this time it was hard for him to remember things.

"Please!" she begged of him one day with her hands out to his, meaning that he should intermit his ceaseless watching of her. "I feel like the insect under the microscope." She ended with that brief, halfway laugh.

"I won't," said Ravant. "It helps me. And that is what you are paid for doing."

"Yes," said the girl, at once relapsing into her shell. "That is what I am paid for!"

"The only thing you need to be a real beauty is a smile. Can't you get further than halfway? Try it. You won't break anything. Smile for the drunken pig one of those smiles that won't come off."

"Have *you* ever smiled?" retorted the girl.

"I grin all day," answered Ravant.

"Yes — you grin."

Ravant caught the subtlety and was both amazed at his nurse and shocked at himself. He remembered that it was very long since his face had known the smile of gentleness.

"Let's learn the art together," he laughed. "By the Lord, you are good for me!"

"Then I must admit that you are also good for me."

“Smile !” commanded Ravant.

“I cannot,” laughed the girl.

Ravant laughed, and knew how splendid and strange this was to him.

“If you would do that more often, it would be good for you,” said Ravant again.

“And you would be — good !”

“Yes —” agreed the invalid, “if you would smile so for me —”

“Oh, I meant *your* own smile !” cried the blushing nurse.

Ravant looked upon this blush until it had much the effect that looking upon the wine when it is red used to have upon him.

“Here !” he cried.

The girl came toward him. He caught her face between his hands and rounded it there.

“I have taken all the lines away. You have no business to have them.”

“My life —” said the girl, simply. “Those lines are its history. They belong there.”

“Then can you read my history in mine ?” asked the man.

“Yes.”

“Do they say that I am a brute ?”

“ Yes.”

“ Plainly ? ”

“ Quite plainly.”

“ My God ! Why did not some one tell me that secret before ? We go about thinking our faces conceal the very things they shout aloud ! ”

He looked again at her face.

“ Yes, yours speaks of sorrow — ”

A silence then —

“ What was it ? ”

“ Others said what you have just said. That I was ugly. A woman has nothing — is nothing — without beauty. That is her one source of power.”

Ravant laughed incredulously.

“ Women like *me*,” added the nurse.

IV

HE DID NOT KNOW THAT IT WAS LOADED

ONE day the nurse told him — as he insisted — the mystery of his opulent situation.

The person who had fired the shot had learned the effect of it from the newspapers, and being rich and sorry, had put his fortune at the disposal of the victim, and none of it was to be spared if it might help in the least to make him perfectly well again. Every cent of the very many the person had was at his disposal. And that his disposal of it might be the more free from embarrassment, he preferred to remain anonymous himself, and to make the hospital, or the nurse herself, if the victim preferred that, his almoner.

“Preferred to remain anonymous!” laughed Ravant. “He preferred to keep out of jail. I’d have him there in no time if I knew who he was!”

“It appears,” said the nurse, “that he did not know his pistol was loaded.”

Ravant exploded again — first with mirth, then with vengeance.

“The infernal old sneak and liar! To shoot a man simply because he happened to be drunk! Thank God a jag is not capital yet! It is no excuse to say that he didn’t know it was loaded. When he took up that pistol, it was with intent to kill. And, if I still remember any law, that is enough to hang him —”

“But they don’t hang people,” gasped the little nurse, “for anything but murder, do they?”

“I was going to say *if he had killed me.*”

“Oh!”

“Anyhow, we’ll make it the dearest lesson to the gentlemen who do not know it is loaded that ever was taught! We will spend that last cent of his. If not, we’ll throw it away! We are going to Europe at his expense. I need that to complete my recovery. And even then I will always wear this plate on my head in memory of him! And we’ll let the newspapers have it. It may prevent some other drunkard from such

happiness as I am now enjoying, and teach the idiot with an empty gun to respect it as if it were loaded. I'll be a missionary to my drunken kind all the world over! What do you say? By the way, what is your name?"

"Brown," said the nurse.

"Whew!" said the invalid. "We can't change that — can we?"

"No."

"Marriage would do it."

"Yes."

"Ravant is better than Brown, eh?"

But then he laughed — he had frightened her!

"What's your first name?"

"Rachel."

"Heavens! But we might call you Ray. Ray Brown is not impossible. Did you notice that when I spoke of going to Europe and spending the old man's money, I said *we*?"

"Yes," said the girl.

"And it didn't appeal to you? — make your little heart flutter — Ray?"

"No."

"But you would help to try to ruin the old man?"

"I think it just for you to punish him in that way — but I am only a nurse."

"Well — you are going with me — and that is the end of it. I need you and shall need you for a long time. In fact, I shall need you always. But, since you won't marry me, as a nurse you will go!"

"Impossible! Mr. Ravant!" gasped the girl.

"Which?" snarled Ravant, in the old manner.

"Going to Europe with you — as your nurse — alone —"

"Well, then, we'll take a chaperon. The old man must pay for her too."

The girl was silent.

"Look here. I noticed that you didn't say that the other thing was — impossible! Marrying me?"

"Yes — that is impossible, too," said the girl.

"Oh!"

"What?"

For his tone was sinister.

“I’ll become a sot again.”

“The doctor says that with that wound in your head it will kill you!”

Ravant laughed — the brutal laugh once more.

“Well, let it. You can’t open the gate of paradise and let me get one glimpse and then shut it in my face. I’ll go back to my own little paradise.”

He was laughing. But she caught the note of hopelessness under it.

“Do you mean to say that if I marry you —”

“I will be good.”

“Understand that I do not love you! Not at all!”

“No one does. Marry me anyhow. Marry me to get rid of me. If you fall in love with some one else, it is off.”

The girl sobbed. She was on her knees at his bed. He did not like this.

“Never mind — never mind — child. I only thought we could make it less expensive to the old man in that way. I could then

stop your wages, and we would not need a chaperon. And I really fancied that this thing inside of me which yearns for you — can't wait till the night is over and you and morning come — is love. But I don't know what the thing is — I never had the symptoms before — speak to the doctor about it — tell him I have ceased to be a pig. But, perhaps *you* know. Do you? Were you ever in love?"

"No, sir," answered the nurse.

"Stop crying!" thundered Ravant.

"Yes, sir," said the little nurse.

V

A FOOL AND HIS MONEY

“WELL, thank God,” Ravant said, later on, “that you didn’t refuse me because you didn’t know me. I can’t fancy a better way of finding a man out than being his nurse. But I may not always be a brute. So, remember that I want to marry you, and, when you don’t think me too much of a brute think sometimes about marrying me—you may get used to it!”

“Yes, sir,” said the nurse.

“How much money have I?”

“About four dollars, sir.”

“I don’t blame you now. I thought there was at least ten in my clothes. Four dollars is mighty little to begin housekeeping upon. Keep it for me, will you, until the last cent of the gentleman who did not know it was loaded is gone.”

Later:

“You might as well come and help to spend the old man’s money. We will travel in

private cars. Two maids for you, two valets for me. Our pictures in the newspapers. A retinue to smile welcome to us at each city. Another to weep as we depart. We shall leave a trail of American gold in our wake across Europe!"

He had caught her interest. Only he thought it was something which she said it was not.

"Look here. You do like me a little. I have seen you watch me while I pretended to sleep. And I'll try to learn what love is and to make you love me. I think I can."

The girl looked down.

"Look here, I was a gentleman and a lawyer before I was a drunkard, and I can be again, if any one cares to have me be. Please marry me!"

"I don't love you," said the girl again, with her head still down.

"I know. But I love you — I'm sure now that that is what it is. You see, it's one of two things for me — you or rum. That's why I'm working at it overtime. You won't regret it — hanged if you do."

VI

THE OLD MAN'S LAST CENT

WELL, she did marry him, and she did not regret it — nor did he.

To me it is a wonder that she did not. For he had done the threatened newspapering so well that already upon their arrival at the steamer all the passengers were lined up to await them. And the smile they got there followed them to Europe, and into the most remote corners of the globe where they penetrated to escape it. It became at last a smile of contempt. And he began to understand that it was for him alone and that the world had exempted his wife from it.

“I’m glad for that,” he told her. “If I am to go about the world a cad and a fool, to be laughed at — I am glad that you are — ”

“To be *pitied* as your victim?” laughed his happy wife. “No. I don’t want anything that is not yours, and you shall have nothing that is not mine.”

If they escaped it for a day, they never did for two. Always the servants were in line where they arrived, with the expectation of them in their banal faces. But always she was excepted.

"I wish I could rise with you," sighed Ravant, whimsically. "I hate to be separated from you. But they won't have me, and they won't do without you. I suppose my claws still show somewhere."

"Whither I go, you shall go," his wife threatened. "I am too happy — that is what the world sees. What care I — for anything but joy and you!"

She kissed Ravant.

But presently her "beauty" and her "magnetism" began to be paragraphic with him in the newspapers — of which he said he was glad, and was not.

"Beloved," he told her, "it is a pity you married me."

"Why? — beloved also."

"Because you might have had any one of the effete noblemen of Europe, and escaped newspapering."

“But I would only have been satisfied with a crowned head.”

“I suppose even that is possible to the ‘prevalent goddess’” — he was reading from a newspaper.

“I have it!” laughed his wife, touching the plate which covered his wound.

And then, I am almost sorry to say, yet not quite, that a little mist came into the eyes of the Ravant who had once been a brute, and he remembered all those hospital days.

“How splendid you have become,” he said.

“Thanks to you,” she whispered in his arms, where still he was the savage Ravant and always would be.

“But all I am you have made of me!”

“But, too, all I am you have made of me!” she laughed.

“One thing I take credit for,” he joyed with her, “smiles *do* become your face.”

“And thought and care yours. The lines of which we once spoke — are gone! From both our faces! Is not that wonderful?”

“Wonderful,” he agreed.

Suddenly she was serious.

“I think we belong together. I thank God always that we met. You were what I needed — the man God meant to complete me. Before you came I was worse than you were before I came. Thank God we met — no matter how!”

“Not forgetting to thank the loaded gun! For a long time I have been sorry for the old man. It has not seemed long — but there are indications that the last cent has been reached. I would pay him back if I could!”

“You never, never could!” laughed his wife.

“But how much do you suppose we have spent?”

“Don’t know! Don’t know,” she chanted. “That is the beauty of it. We don’t have to! No accounts to keep! Money carefully ahead of us at each stopping place! It is like a slot machine! You put in a nickel and get a thousand dollars!”

“It’s wonderful how well he has done it. Hasn’t kicked or funkcd once! Well, when I get back to America I mean to hunt him up and get down on my knees and God-bless him!” laughed Ravant.

"We'll go together!" said his wife.

"Yes! And confess all! I'll show him *you*! He'll forgive us then and won't regret —"

"His poverty!" laughed Ravant's happy wife.

"Yes. Hang it! That's the horror of it. Once I thought it would be the joy of it! And how he must have writhed under the newspapering! Such a sensitive chap as he is! It has been torture to even me. But I deserve that punishment."

"You do!" cooed his wife.

"Let us go home," said Ravant, "and live in a little house — alone!"

"Done!" cried his wife.

"We'll change our names and the newspapers will not be able to find us!"

"Done!"

"But — there wasn't any money here, you know" (it was Rouen).

"Perhaps in a day or two."

So, at Rouen, they waited for the money to take them home to a new happiness.

VII

HER BIG TRUMP

ONE day she got a big letter with the American postmark. She laughed, made a certain mystery of it, and kept it from him.

“And this is my nurse!” he joyed.

“Yes!” she admitted.

He was opening a letter of his own which he was keeping from her.

“But there must be no secrets between chums.”

She tried to take the letter, but he withheld it.

“Ah, I must first confess? Well — how much do you love me?”

“As much as I can,” said her husband, seriously.

“I know that to be a great deal. How much can you forgive?”

Now she was in his arms.

“As much as I love,” said Ravant.

“Then I am quite safe.”

She crept a little deeper into his arms and opened her letter.

“Dearest, I married you under an assumed name.”

“Thank God!” laughed Ravant — “unless it is a worse one than Brown.”

“I could have been very happy as Mrs. Brown — as happy as I am as Mrs. Ravant.”

She ignored the rest and withdrew the contents of the letter. They appeared to be a deed.

“*Dearest, I have a house.* Are you angry that I am so rich? Part of an inheritance. But now it must be sold. This is from my lawyer. He tells me that I must sign the deed both with my proper maiden name and as your wife” — she stooped there to kiss him, and repeated the word — “and you must join in it as my husband. It is a bore to own a house, isn’t it, dearest?”

But her lightness found him full of terror. She heard him breathe:

“What was your maiden name?”

“Ruth Fenton,” smiled his wife.

Again that exclamation.

"What is it?" she begged.

"No," he said. "There must be no secret between chums. My punishment has come. And it is greater than I could possibly have conceived. I must read you this, and then if you wish — go away from you."

"Not while I am here," she laughed, beginning to understand. "Whither thou goest, I will go. You can't — cannot lose me — me, your lawful wife!"

Though she laughed with tremendous happiness, he read the letter through with no abatement of his terror.

"As you know, I have been all these two years finding the person who shot you. At last I have her — yes, *her*! It is a woman. Her name is Ruth Fenton. Her large fortune has been exhausted by your world-renowned extravagances, and she is now selling the last thing she owns — her house. I hope you feel as mean as I do — for you! GAST."

"Yes, I am the old man," laughed Ravant's happy wife into her husband's face.

“Yes,” he said, and then again, “yes — you — are — the — old — man! The old man! You! Me!”

“*We!*” cooed his wife.

“All those things I said about him were about you! *To* you!”

“*Yes!* Wasn’t it funny?”

A long time they sat there, she looking up, he down — eye to eye. But she never ceased to smile.

He tried to go.

“Not while I am here!” she laughed, and, slipping down, held him by the knees.

“No, beloved, after this there shall be, indeed, no secrets between us. I was so unhappy and alone that night that I meant to kill myself. No one cared for me, and I *had* to have some one care for me or die! My hand must have slipped, or, perhaps, I grew afraid. But God himself directed that bullet! You were mine and you were passing — going away from me! If you had gone on, we would never have met. It was the only way to stop you and give you to me, me to you. I went to the hospital and paid to nurse you. They said

you needed no nursing, only care and quiet. And when they knew how important it was to me, for I told them all, they broke their rules all to pieces, and let me do it. And, now, dear one, you must keep what I have given you, what the good God has! You *shall* keep it!" (as he tried to dislodge her) "and you shall keep *me*! For I will *not* go! There, I am a beggar!" She laughed gloriously. "But the happiest beggar on earth, and you have got to support your happy beggar wife forever hereafter. That is to be your punishment."

"Happy punishment!" was the thought which flashed through Ravant.

But he grimly put it out, and for one more last moment the old, brutal Ravant tried to come back. Alas! she was on the floor there before him, her elbows on his knees, her face, halting between smiles and tears, upraised to his, looking out of its glory of living hair, watching the portents there.

And when they did not develop fast enough toward joy, she locked her hands behind his neck suddenly and drew his head down, to the peril of a dislocation.

“You *must* stay to support your beggar wife ; don’t you see ? — *won’t* you understand ? — and perhaps her beggar — *child* ! ”

“What ! ” cried Ravant, everything else out of his head in an instant.

“I always keep my biggest trump for the last, dearest. All women do, don’t they ? It’s so lovely to play it then — when every one thinks all is lost. Oh, beloved ! smile, laugh, shout with me ! How *can* you go away now when you have a beggar wife to support, and a beggar — ch — ! Ah ! ha ! ha ! ”

How could the old, brutal Ravant come back ? He never did. How could he go ? He did not.

“But we will *not* sell your house. We will go back, even if it must be in the steerage, and work *together*, live *together*, happily ever after ! ”

“Dominus vobiscum ! ” cried Ravant’s happy wife, leaping into his arms.

And all this, save the steerage, they did. And at this very moment they are living as happily as they planned.



“She was on the floor there before him, her face upraised to his”

LIEBEREICH

LIEBEREICH¹

I

THE HOUSE THAT HE AND EMMY BUILT

"HE'D be better off," said Mrs. Schwalm, referring to the possible death of old Liebereich.

"You don't mean you'd be?" grinned Hermann Schlimm.

He had drifted into Mrs. Krantz's kitchen, among the women, after the funeral. No one gave him any attention.

Old Liebereich's wife had just been buried, and they were met to pay Mrs. Krantz their respects. She had been the "next-door neighbor" through Mrs. Liebereich's illness.

There was some strawberry preserve presently, and some "field tea."

Then Mrs. Krantz said to Mrs. Schwalm:

"You had better go now."

Mrs. Schwalm was "next door" on the

¹ Copyright, 1904, by The Century Co.

other side. She would now housekeep for old Liebereich for a week. Then Mrs. Engwein, who lived next to Mrs. Krantz, would take her turn, and so on while old Liebereich lived — which it was thought would not be long. For no one ever went to “the poor-house” or “the home” from this German vicinage.

These things were so well understood that they were not even discussed at this gathering. But there was a well-defined understanding that the brief management of old Liebereich would be difficult. Mrs. Schwalm rose to go.

“He won’t fold his britches unless you make him,” warned Mrs. Krantz.

“And I’ve heared,” said another, “that he never hangs ’em on the back of a cheer if he kin put ’em on the floor.”

Old Liebereich had an odious reputation for this sort of thing.

“You know Emmy she spoiled him.”

“If *he* didn’t do things, *she* done ’em.”

“That’s a good way to spoil ’em!”

Mrs. Krantz warned again:

“You got to keep the clock on him all the

time, or it's no use. At six he's got to eat his supper. You'll have to push him right in his cheer, and see that he gits things in his mouth. If you don't, you'll have to clean 'em off the floor. Seven, to bed with him. Yisterday he says to me, says he: 'I ain't no dog-gone baby! Lemme alone! I kin git to bed myself.' But I had him asleep by that time."

Mrs. Schwalm sighed. It was plain that she was going to a house of trouble. But it was her duty, and she would do it, as they all would.

I do not know at what point, precisely, along the pike, east and west from old Liebereich, the "next-door neighbor" obligation ceased. It was very far. Nevertheless, before the year which succeeded the death of his wife had passed, its courtesies had been exhausted. Each neighbor had served two turns, and each had murmured dismally at the prospect of a third. Finally, they all joined in discussing out-and-out rebellion against custom and Liebereich.

Indeed, one morning the doctor, whose

business it was to keep the people up to their duties, found an interregnum. He brought Mrs. Krantz from her house to old Liebereich's as one does a detected criminal.

"I've had three turns a'ready," she defended.

"The man has had no breakfast," said the doctor. "He must eat while he lives!"

"Well, he'd be better off, and so would we, if he was —"

The doctor stopped her with a solemn up-lifted finger:

"'Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.'"

She thought it made no difference that she gave grudgingly. But old Liebereich felt the touch of impatience. And he saw that she swept the dirt into a corner, stood the broom where it did not belong, and left the stale water in his pitcher.

"You git out!" he quavered senilely. "I kin housekeep for myself!"

"Git your other leg in your britches, or I'll —"

He did it so suddenly, in his fright, that Mrs. Krantz's humor returned, and she laughed. She was dressing him. He broke out afresh at this evidence of safety:

"I built this here house before I was twenty-one or you was born—I did. My mother she says, says she: 'Bill, soon it will be a man in the house. Don't you think you'd better git the house? You and Emmy's mighty thick.' I took the hint. And, on the morning I got twenty-one, here I was! And, begosh, there"—he pointed to the other side of the fireplace—"was Emmy! She and me done it all—together. She drawed the plan. You see them bricks that ain't the right color? Emmy laid 'em! Yessir! With her little hands—and a trowel—and mortar! They are all right except the color. I says, says I, 'Take 'em right out!' But she threw the mortar on me, and it went in my hair and eyes, and she had to wash it out—that's why they was never changed. And I'm glad they wasn't. Whenever I look at 'em—one of 'em's a little loose—I kin see my Emmy laying 'em! Well, you never see nothing as

nice, I'll bet you, as Emmy laying bricks! Old Gaertner made the bricks—out there where the boys swim now. That was all clay once. None of the ground clods like you git in bricks nowadays! It's too long for you to remember, I expect. You not more'n sixty-five or so." Then his mind flew back to the cause of his rebellion, and he was all the more angry that he had forgotten it in thinking of Emmy. "And now you want to boss me! I won't stand it. Git out! You're just a spring chicken."

"You shut up!" cried Mrs. Krantz.

At this anathema he gasped in fresh fear.

"Betsy," he said humbly when he could speak, "you're too young to talk to me like that!"

"I'm going on seventy!" snapped Mrs. Krantz; which boast was untrue.

"So?"

Old Liebereich caught the insincerity and turned to inspect her.

"'Tain't so!" he said, with old-fashioned passion against a lie. "You think you kin

shut me up that-a-way and I'll go to bed easy! You git right out!"

"If you don't take keer I will!" cried the exasperated housekeeper. "Let's see what the Lord says!"

She closed her eyes and put a finger on a text of the Bible which lay open there, meaning, if it were favorable, to take him at his word and leave the consequences to heaven.

But what she read was:

"Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

II

EMMY AND HE WERE NEVER APART

WHEN seven o'clock came, old Liebereich, unrebuked, still reviled her and her house-keeping. For the Scriptures had spoken and the woman knew her duty. She did it. And not a word delayed or hastened by an instant old Liebereich's relentless progress to bed.

Even when he was there he said :

"You can't keep no house! My Emmy kin beat you all! Look at that!"

It was an andiron which had become dull.

"When my Emmy gits back you kin go to grass!"

But the last word was mumbled in the delicious sleep Mrs. Krantz had brought him.

Then Mrs. Krantz humbly polished the dulled andiron, cleaned the dirt out of the corners, restored the broom to its rightful

corner, folded old Liebereich's trousers and hung them over the back of a chair, lighted the lamp, shaded it, looked again at that scriptural text, as if to ask whether every cross had been borne, then went out, to return at five in the morning. For old Liebereich was permitted to sleep late. He was no trouble when he slept.

Now, while old Liebereich sleeps, I shall tell you some things you ought to know. In the idiom of the vicinage he was considered "funny," which means only queer. Happiness had made him so, they said. His most constant and odious boast was that he had loved his wife for eighty years. It began, he said, when he was four and she was born.

And old Liebereich did not know that she was dead. Something had dulled his faculties when they told him she would die, and now he believed (as they told him, so that he would not "bother" them) that she was at her sister's in Maryland to get well, and would be home soon. So the curious jerk of his head toward the door by the fireplace

meant only that he was vigilant for his wife's return. The neighbors thought it part of his aberration.

But even the little intelligence he retained made out this return to have been logically too long delayed. It was no longer "very soon," as they had at first told him; it was scarcely "soon," as they had at last told him.

And Christmas was coming!

"Do you think she will be here for Christmas?" he asked each one of them.

They assured him of this.

"Then I'll hang up the old stockings and surprise her!"

Here, again, I must explain that they had always cherished the element of surprise in their Christmas giving.

You will have seen that old Liebereich was living too long for his neighbors. I must be careful how I put their sentiments into words, so that no injustice be done them. I think I had better say that it began to seem to them like effrontery for him to live on.

They said oftener now and with greater unction that he would be better off. And they answered Hermann Schlimm's query (in the second paragraph of this story), when he repeated it, with accumulating anger now.

But you are not to suppose that old Liebereich was made unhappy by the least knowledge of this. On the contrary, nothing of it reached him. He found another reason for their brusqueness. They were simply *women* — and unlike Emmy.

One day, Mrs. Schwalm, wearily responding to his questions about his wife, asked him why he did not write to her. This at least, she thought cunningly, would consume time, keep him quiet, and give death added opportunity.

Now, in all his thoughts there had never been that one.

"Why, you see," he said, "Emmy and me was never apart for a day. It was no need to write. And," he went on, "I ain't no scholar. But — say — you got any ink?"

The letter was a secret office which he attended to himself. It took many days. But he was very happy afterward, and deliv-

ered it to Mrs. Schwalm and Mrs. Krantz, who were to get a stamp and mail it.

"What we going to do with it?" whispered Mrs. Schwalm. "Burn it?"

"No. Open it."

However, Mrs. Schwalm, who was known to be sentimental, opposed this.

"But it's got to be answered."

This was so. Mrs. Krantz cumulated her arguments.

"He'll ask for the answer a dozen times a day till you're crazy!"

"Well, anyhow, let's wait a little. He may die any day," was the way Mrs. Schwalm temporized.

"You're interfering with the Lord's business!" chided the curious Mrs. Krantz, finally.

III

“ VERGISSNICHTMEIN ”

So, while they went away with this letter which was never to be mailed, old Liebereich sat by the fire in the fireplace which he had built, and rocked gently, and sang old German songs, and would not go to bed, but fell asleep there. And even in his sleep he was found singing:

“ Blau ist ein Blümlein
Das heizt Vergissnichtmein — ”

None of us will ever agree with those old German wives, I think. How could old Liebereich ever be better off — how could any one — than singing old German songs by the fire and waiting for the coming of his wife — and Christmas?

And he got an answer to his letter. It told him very briefly not to worry, that she would be home at Christmas. It was signed “ Emmy.”

For the wives had said among themselves

that God would understand. Just as if they understood God! If He should take him, all would be well. If not, He would find a way.

It was because they thought God would understand that they had opened that pitiful letter of old Liebereich's. He spoke of his loneliness; how he had waited for her without complaint; how, now, he could wait no longer. At the end he told her, with the imperiousness of a husband, that she *must* come home. They read this; they saw the childish blots; they knew where his half-palsied hands had missed the line, then recovered it; finally they read the boyish signature — with dry eyes.

Then they wrote that reply.

I hope that neither you nor I could have done this — with dry eyes.

But the night before Christmas arrived, and old Liebereich's wife had not come. Nevertheless, he had no doubt. No one had ever lied to him except Mrs. Krantz. And he had never lied. And here was her letter. There was her name.

They came in and found him reading the letter.

"My Emmy never fooled me yit," he told them exultingly. "She'll come. Only she's late a little."

He put the letter in their eyes.

"Don't it say she'll be home *at* Christmas?"

And I hope that neither you nor I have ever had that happen to us—such a letter thrust into our eyes!

When they whispered among themselves he grew cunning, and pretended to sing, while he listened. What he heard made him think that she was already come, but was in hiding to surprise him. Something was to happen the moment he went to sleep. And he fancied that they meant to bring her in at that moment. Well, he liked that. No surprise he had ever planned himself was quite so fine. *Emmy* was to be his Christmas gift!

But what they had spoken about was the paleness of his old face, and how he had recently "failed." For he could not sleep now, or eat, for watching and waiting.

And old Liebereich carried his cunning on to a desperate end. He pretended to be prodigiously sleepy. Yet, when they would have hustled him off to bed, he suddenly and savagely rebelled, stamped his feet, and put them out of the house, in a specious fury they could not withstand.

“I kin put myself to bed,” he cried happily after them. “I ain’t no dog-gone baby. I won’t be bossed in my own house!”

But the moment he had closed the door upon them he laughed.

And when he pulled down the blinds he did not know that he shut out their peeping eyes.

It all had made him tired.

IV

THE NIGHT-SHIRT WITH THE FEATHER-STITCH- ING OF BLUE

HE unlocked the door by the fireplace, presently, and lighted two new candles. Then he got from the bottom drawer the night-shirt with the blue feather-stitching about the collar, and put it on. His trousers lay on the floor.

“Now,” he laughed defiantly, “what will Mrs. Schwalm say? Let her say it!”

For you must know that such things as this adorned night-shirt had been banished to the bottom drawer, since his commandeering, as far too frivolous for his years. You will also observe that old Liebereich expected Mrs. Schwalm to see him in this garment and to rebuke him. But it was about this that he was so very reckless. For at the moment of its discovery his wife would have arrived, and then, in his own words, they might all go to grass!

But this obliges me to speak of old Liebereich's cunning plan, or, which perhaps is better, to let him tell it for you as he now told it to himself in the kitchen of the house he and Emmy had built.

"They'll bring her in that door by the fireplace, all dressed for Christmas. And they'll all be crowding in behind her to see what I'll do. Well, they'll see! Oh, they'll see! I wish it would be early morning and the sun come through the door. I expect I kin wait that much longer. And mebbby the bells'll ring. They'll sneak her right up to my bed, and then they'll holler, 'Merry Christmas, Liebereich! Wake up!'

"But I'll fool 'em. I'll hug Emmy right afore 'em all, and let 'em know that I've fooled 'em! And I'll laugh at Mrs. Schwalm. So will Emmy. And after that—" Now what *could* there be after that? "After that we'll just be happy. That's all."

Meanwhile he tidied the room as it had never been tidied before, and then fixed his thick white hair about his face in the fashion which Emmy liked.

At last he held up both candles and looked at himself in the mirror, and there were pink spots on his cheek-bones, and the bit of blue about his neck went very well with his faded eyes. Old Liebereich wagged his head with the satisfaction of a dandy at what he saw.

Suddenly he started away from the mirror, then back to it. Then he laughed.

“I thought it was you, Emmy. And you looked like that first day when you saw your face in it. Sixteen. I wouldn’t like you to come back looking sixteen, and me eighty-four. No, I ain’t quite ready for you yit, Emmy; I must get clean sheets. But we ain’t far apart now no more!”

He went close to the mirror to whisper this. He still was not sure that he did not see her there.

And I hope that you and I have “seen things” in the mirror, though perhaps we are not eighty-four and have no Emmy.

Then he went on getting ready for her till he was very tired—more tired, he thought, than he had ever been.

Outside Mrs. Schwalm was whispering to Mrs. Krantz :

“No, they ain’t far apart ! He’s mighty funny to-night. He is seeing things.”

At last he was ready to hang up their stockings on the brass nails which had been put into the mantel for this purpose when the house was built.

And, for something to surprise her, he took from behind that loose brick a gold coin. It had the date of 1825 on it. There was a hole in it, and through the hole a narrow blue ribbon.

But now he stopped and his heart heaved.

“It was to cut the baby’s teeth on.”

After a while :

“We was going to call him Billy if he was a boy — Emmy if she was a girl.”

Again :

“But there never was no baby.”

And then, at last :

“But there never was no baby.”

He put the coin in the toe of Emmy’s stocking and went to bed and closed his eyes — to watch. And his last words were :

“Tired — tired — tired — Emmy !”

He dozed and made himself wake so often, and nothing had happened, that he grew afraid and much more tired. And the red went out of his cheeks, and he could feel his face becoming very cold.

He dozed a long time, at last without waking.

Then they outside, seeing this, came in — all those neighbors — stealthily, whispering and going toward his bed. Some one brought a candle and held it so close to his eyes that it scorched and tortured him. He woke; he was tremendously terrified by their stealth, but he did not understand at all — he who had never had such thoughts as theirs.

They did not know that he was awake.

“He is better off,” said one of them.

“He died easy,” said another.

Then, suddenly, old Liebereich understood. He did not quiver. But his heart was bursting.

“I don’t know about that,” said a wary one.

Some one took Liebereich’s hand from under the covers.

“’Sh! He’s only asleep,” the voice whispered.

Another sighed a disappointment.

“Touch his feet,” said one.

This was done, and the same verdict reached. He was not yet dead.

“He still thinks she’ll come!”

There was a laugh somewhere.

“Look at the night-shirt!”

“How long is she dead now?”

They left him then, and he could breathe a moment. They put into his stocking some things they had brought — simple things — at the last a spiral of pink-and-white candy.

But there was no laughter — only silence. Once more they were doing their duty. And once more — for only the second sad time in his long life — old Liebereich understood.

“It ain’t much,” said a pitying one.

“It’s enough,” said another, crossly.

The last one said — to comfort both :

“He’ll never know no better.”

Then they came and looked at him again.

“Yes — only asleep.”

Another voice said :

“In the morning, I expect. Often they sleep away.”

A doubting young woman said :

“Mebby it just happened now and he ain’t cold yet.”

But her elders, who had seen death often, only frowned.

Then they went out.

Old Liebereich lay very still. He was icy cold. The feet and hands they had touched would not get warm. He felt yet their cold touch. Two tears stole down his cheeks. His heart was still filled to bursting. Yet he lay quite still. Presently something like content came and stayed, and smoothed the sorrow from his face, and made it beautiful.

V

THE SECOND OPENING OF THE DOOR

THEN, without the least warning, the door opened again, directly in his eyes, and everything was quite as he had fancied it. Like a picture in its frame, there stood his wife dressed for Christmas. And she was well and happy — by the smiles on her face. And the morning had come, as he had wished ; for, as the door opened, the sun behind her smote away the darkness, and it seemed as if she had come down to him on those sheaves of glittering javelins. And yes, closely crowding behind her, came the very people he knew would come, filling all the door and making a background for his picture. Such a background ! He forgave them all at once. For he must have dreamed those other, sadder things. And, more, — and better still, — the bells of the little town were jangling out their Christmas madrigal. (You know how dear the bells are to Germans !)



"Like a picture in its frame, there stood his wife"

And old Liebereich, too, did everything just as he had planned it. He lay quietly in his bed until they shouted, "Merry Christmas, Liebereich! Wake up!" Then he rose and took his wife in his arms and laughed at them, — in the very faces of them all! — and told them how cunningly he had fooled them. Precisely as he had planned.

And he had two recollections of the moment. One was that Mrs. Schwalm *smiled* when she saw the blue feather-stitched night-shirt; the other was that his wife was the prettiest of them all. After that came the vast happiness — all as he had planned.

For all of this, from the second opening of that door, old Liebereich had only dreamed. But, quite as they had said, he would never know better, for he never woke.

And when the neighbors indeed came through that door again in the morning, with guilt upon them, with stealth, wondering whether he were now dead, while it was yet dark, holding candles once more to his eyes, old Liebereich met them with such a beautiful, smiling, heaven-touched face that, one and

all, they dropped to their knees. And their eyes were not dry.

And I am no longer sure of that philosophy, a few pages past, where we agreed that nothing could be better than to wait for old Liebereich's wife — and Christmas.

Or maybe the German wives are right, and he is better off?

For perhaps he hears sweeter music than the Christmas bells; perhaps there is a more glorious light than the morning sun in that doorway; perhaps the background of his picture is crowded with fairer faces than those of his former neighbors. God knows! Perhaps immortal youth has, in truth, come. Perhaps he does, indeed, embrace his wife. Else what is the use of heaven? God knows!

“IUPITER TONANS”

“IUPITER TONANS”¹

I

THE SERIOUS INSOMNIA OF HIER RUHET

THE Spring of The Thousand Years on the Island of Floresnik, in the South Pacific, has now a pink marble panel, with an ornamental border, put up by the Society for the Prevention of Disappointment, warning the traveller, in Gothic letters and seven languages, that he who drinks of it will sleep unchanged a thousand years.

But no such warning was there on the morning of the 15th of December, 1504, when the *Iupiter Tonans*, seventy-two guns, Admiral Hier Ruhet, from Amsterdam eighty-eight days, bore down upon the little island. The great new battleship had been separated from her consorts by the thick weather following the storm on the 12th of January of that year, and had now been out of her reckoning and without fresh water for twenty-three days.

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There was little attempt at discipline as the great ship came to anchor. Indeed, none was needed. From Ruhet down to the ship's boots, Jawrge, but one desire prevailed,—water.

Nor was there any waiting for boats. The crew waded or swam ashore and drank till they could drink no more. Nicht Wahr, the haughty first officer, dropped to the earth by the side of the third cook and put his face into the enchanting pool with him — jowl by jowl.

So that around the great spring, like the fringe on the admiral's cap—which he had taken off to drink—was the crew of the Tonans. And when all were satisfied, the pool had nearly vanished.

"Ah, Nicht Wahr," said the admiral, to his next in command, "now I am again filled up, thank God!" with which he rolled over on his back and disposed himself to sleep.

But he remembered then how the pool had lowered as they drank and cried out humorously to his men: "On your life, don't no one but me go to sleep till the ship has had her drink. Fill everything!"

Again he turned upon his back, whispering to Nicht Wahr: “You know that my black beast is insomnia, and it has never been worse than recently. Therefore I must snatch my sleep when I can. I never felt so much like it in my life. Keep awake until the ship is filled — excuse me — don’t speak to me! — and don’t let me sleep after six o’clock.”

“Ay, ay, sir,” answered Nicht Wahr, though his own eyelids were heavy. “But there will be no need of that, sir. You always wake first. Your sleeplessness is a great misfortune to us all.”

Ruhet was already asleep.

However, by threats and persuasion, and even beatings, Wahr kept the men at work until everything on the ship which could hold water was full. Then all dropped to sleep in their tracks.

II

AND THE POLITE CANNON OF WEISS NICHT

Now it happened that, by reason of the admiral's recent insomnia, he *did* wake first — having slept but four hundred years and some odd months and weeks and days. And as he woke (the next morning, as he supposed) he swore with ecstasy — so fine did he feel.

“Wake up, you lazy lunkers!” he cried gayly to his men, making a prodigious yawn himself. “I feel like a fighting cock —” or words to that effect. I am not a nautical person. At all events he went on addressing them: “Unless all signs fail, something will happen this good day. By my bay mare's currycomb, I pity the craft that the Tonans falls in with to-day. For, having drunken, we now need to eat, and there is not a rat aboard the Tonans that might serve us for food. Up with you!”

A few of the men who, like Ruhet, did not

sleep well, struggled to wakefulness at his voice. But, as to the most of them, it required his heavy boot, and his nearly as heavy hand, to kick and cuff them to their senses. However, at last, all were awake, and so good had been the admiral's rest that his temper still kept. And this was saying much for Ruhet.

Weiss Nicht, the second officer, came for orders, scarcely able to conceal his yawn, for he was one of the crew who was never troubled with insomnia, notwithstanding the fact that Ruhet had made it fashionable.

"Up anchor and away, Weiss Nicht. Some ship must furnish us meat to-day, and we will give them water in exchange."

Each took a final drink from the spring, which now flowed full and free once more, and then went to their stations with as good a will as Ruhet himself. And it required this to get the sleepy ship under way.

For, having once drunk of the Spring of The Thousand Years, one is immune; its waters have no more power to cause sleep, but, on the contrary, produce such a delightful state of exhilaration as to approach mild

intoxication. It was in this blissful state that they finally set sail.

Now, they were scarce an hour under way when this Weiss Nicht, who was the gunner's mate on board, and many other things at other times and places, sighted, hull down, on the port quarter a small, strange craft painted green and scarcely to be distinguished from the water itself.

This he reported, as was his duty, to his superior, Nicht Wahr.

"Hah!" cried the proud and apparently learned Nicht Wahr, "it is a rowing barge upon which some one has built a small cabin to float about in. It is good for the sun and the rain — is a cabin like that."

"And the night dews are bad," agreed the gibing Weiss Nicht.

"Go on," commanded Nicht Wahr, who hated the servile but critical second officer and gunner's mate aboard. "They have no food. They can be of no use to us. To your station, Nicht!"

"But it moves, you fools!" thundered Ruhet, who had come on deck in time to hear

the contention. "And it has neither sails like the Egyptian craft nor oars like the Roman. I wish I had it!"

"If your excellency will pardon Nicht Wahr," said the apparently learned one, with a great bow, "he begs leave to doubt that it moves — much."

"Hang you! Haven't I got a couple of eyes?"

Now Nicht Wahr only bowed, but as he did so he turned and smiled pityingly to Weiss Nicht, as who should say: "Let him have his way. But, oh! Moves! Like this ship, for instance!"

And perhaps that is the reason he only answered (when Ruhet had said imperiously), "Well, then?"

"Excellency, perhaps they have in the hold little wheels turned by the rowers. There was talk of such a thing in Byzantium last year. Perhaps a knot a day."

Now there had been no such talk at Byzantium. It was the *reductio ad absurdum* of the haughty and apparently learned Wahr. He winked at Nicht.

But Ruhet insisted all the more because of that saying of Wahr's: "Ha-a! Is that so? It must be a pretty kind of toy, then. I want it."

"So you shall," said the second officer. "For does not the great admiral get everything he wants?"

"I have had no breakfast!"

"But you shall! Ay, before the day is done!" supplemented Wahr.

"Well, stop talking like a dictionary and get the toy for me. Then we'll chase for food. Grace before meat, you know, aha, aha, ha!"

Nicht Wahr cast upon the unhappy Weiss Nicht a look of superior hatred; that he had by his impertinence rushed in where he had feared to tread, and had brought forth that bitter humor of Hier Ruhet's.

"I desire, sir, that hereafter you will remain at your station to await my orders, or those of his excellency," he said. "*I* will get the toy for him."

"Oh, Wahr, tut, tut!" laughed the admiral, in high glee, because of the success of his humor.

"Oh, Nicht, tut, tut! You must live as brothers aboard."

"Sir," said the haughty next in command, "the discipline must be maintained!"

"Well, since I think of it, that is so," admitted Hier Ruhet. "Get along, Nicht!"

Whereupon Nicht Wahr haughtily commanded Weiss Nicht in addition, that a gun be fired as politely as possible across the bows of the little craft, by the way of invitation for her to heave to—since the admiral desired her—

"In case she should be moving," he said, with a great bow to the admiral.

"Politely, hah?" cried Ruhet. "I think that is a mistake. It is always better to skeer 'em. Hang politeness in a cannon!"

"It is not for that purpose, sir," answered that wise mate, "that I do it—to be polite. But in order that we commit no act of piracy on the high seas."

Then Wahr struck an attitude in which his back was very concave and his feet far apart. For he was a sea lawyer, he said.

III

THE SOUP-SPRING

“THUNDER and blazes!” cried Ruhet, looking about, “who will know it? There is not a soul in sight.”

“The law of nations first, sir. Second, our conscience. Both are everywhere.”

“Well, where are they?” and Ruhet looked about again as if they could somewhere be seen. “Hang bridle,” he cried to the gunner, “you just fire and don’t bother about being polite with your gun. If conscience and law are anywhere about here, they’ll let us know.”

The gunner did so at once, for he hated the first officer as much as the first officer hated him, when he bothered about hating anybody, and he loved his bluff and straightforward admiral.

At once there broke out from the small craft a multitude of flags.

“I told you so, excellency,” said Nicht Wahr.

"Well, tell me again," said Ruhet. "Hanged if I know what it was. I have a short memory."

But the first officer held a haughty silence.

Now the first flags were exchanged for others, nearly all of redder hue.

"By the currycomb of Red Joshua, I think they are poking fun at us. Regular sport! If I were sure of that —"

"Pardon me, they are not, excellency," said Nicht Wahr.

"They are so," cried the savage admiral. "And by the roof of my father's mouth, no one ever poked fun at Hier Ruhet and lived to poke more!"

"Let us have mercy upon them, master," said the hypocritical Nicht Wahr, devoutly crossing his breast. "They are but children. This is but a child's toy, as I told you. We must not kill children." His tenderness appealed strongly to the admiral.

"No, nor cats," answered Ruhet, at once convinced, "for both are unlucky. Especially for the children and cats — ha, ha! And, anyhow, I am getting hungrier every minute.

That water is saline, I suppose. It makes one thirst. Go ahead. Hang the toy — I'm done wanting it."

Now the cunning Nicht Wahr noticed that the little craft had broken out several flags of extremely sanguinary red, and he knew that he would be asked what it meant.

To beguile the admiral while he thought of some explanation he said: "Master, I have heard that near this spring of water there is another from which runs soup. Beautiful — thick — soup!"

Ruhet at once turned from the little craft — forgetting all about it — and shouted, "Where?"

But meanwhile the cunning Wahr had whispered to the much less cunning Nicht, "What do you suppose all that red means?"

Now, Nicht was one of those persons who are wiser than they seem. More there be who seem wiser than they are — including the apparently learned Wahr. But not of that sort was Nicht. Nicht was simple, yet learned.

"Sir," he said, saluting, "that is a declara-

tion of war. All savage nations use red to declare war."

"What is all that red?" asked Ruhet, at this very moment. At once Wahr turned to Ruhet, as if he had got it all out of himself, and said, "Sire, that means war!"

"War?" cried Ruhet. "A dare? Ho! ho! ho!"

And they fell laughing into each other's arms.

When Ruhet could stop laughing, he went on: "Well, we'll give 'em some war! Ho! ho! Then we'll look for that soup-spring. Who told you about it, Wahr? Not to hurt, you know, but just to skeer 'em. I like to skeer people. We'll soon be on 'em. We are going a great gait, anyhow. What do you suppose it is, Wahr?"

"About six knots, excellency," said the great Wahr.

"Bah! By my mother's wig, we must be doing at least thirty by the way we are approaching the toy!"

"Sire; six is our limit."

Nicht Wahr looked and was puzzled

nevertheless. The distance between them was certainly lessening rapidly. As he went to calculate their speed upon the slate, Weiss Nicht stepped up to the admiral and said, "She is approaching *us* at that rate, excellency."

"Impossible," stormed the admiral. "No ship with sails can go as fast as ours—let alone this little nin-comninny, with none at all. The Tonans is the limit, sir. But, all the same, I've changed my mind again—I want it. I will have it! Don't go away from it. Port your helm an ell. Weiswasser [to the steersman at the wheel], I really want the thing. For, by the tail of the ship's cat, it gets prettier and prettier as we come nearer to it."

"And so you shall," said the cunning Nicht Wahr, returning, as a slap at the assurance of the impotent Weiss Nicht, in his absence.

Now the craft was near enough to show a gilt name on her bow.

"Nicht Wahr," said Ruhet, "your eyes are better than mine, and you have swallowed the dictionary; what is she?"

"Can you spell?" whispered Nicht Wahr to Weiss Nicht.

Thereupon Weiss Nicht, who was so much wiser than he seemed, spelled into the ear of Nicht Wahr, who was not, "New Amsterdam."

"Why," said Nicht Wahr, "it has the name of that Dutch place old Columbus discovered some time ago, New Amsterdam. It must be near here — pooh! I knew it!" He looked all about.

"And the children are adrift and are asking for succor —" cried Ruhet. "That's it. Poor things!"

IV

KNOCK WOOD

AT that moment a deep and terrible bass voice boomed all about them, asking, "Tonans ahoy?"

Ruhet nearly fell to the deck. Then he looked about at the men grouped near, in displeasure.

"Who was that?" he demanded. "Let there be no more of it. You all know the state of my nerves. Insomnia is awful on the nerv —"

Again came the voice: "You ignored our signals. Unless you give assurance to the contrary, we will regard you as pirates and take you."

By this time there was no doubt that the voice came from the little boat a mile away.

"Well, what is it?" asked Ruhet, of his wise man. "It cannot be a human voice."

"It is a machine," said Nicht Wahr. "I heard of it at Byzantium."

(He always spoke of Byzantium when he didn't know.)

"It is English," said Weiss Nicht.

"And what is that?" asked Ruhet.

"A language," answered Nicht Wahr, pompously. "Spoken by a machine."

"What does it say?"

"It says 'Good morning,' excellency," answered Nicht Wahr, "and 'How do you do?'"

"It says 'Surrender or I'll shoot,'" said Weiss Nicht, gruffly. "I understand English."

Wahr sulked magnificently.

Ruhet believed Nicht.

"Ha, ha, ha!" he laughed. "That's a good joke. Keep it up. Tell 'em to surrender first and set the example. Give 'em the port broadside. By my mother's lost gold tooth, a good joke—give 'em the whole side."

The broadside was fired and immediately something clipped away the Tonans's figure-head.

"Now, who did that?" roared Ruhet. "Nicht, bring the gunner here who was so

careless as that, and, by my father's smoke-pipe, I'll teach him a lesson."

But alarm now seized upon Ruhet, and he forgot the figurehead. The little craft was seen to be sinking.

"Wahr," he cried, "you are an infernal blunderer. You have let them hit that little thing, and she is going down. Man a boat and get the youngsters out of her, you land lunkers!"

Before this could be done the boat had entirely disappeared.

"It was Nicht," said Wahr.

"Never mind now," said Ruhet, "it's too late. She's gone and we've lost a fine toy and some children through your thickheadedness. Stand by to pick up the floaters."

But, almost immediately, from the starboard quarter, came the voice they had heard before.

"Tonans ahoy! Have you got enough?"

"Well, by the currycomb —" began Ruhet, "how did this ship turn clean about without my noticing it? Look here, Wahr, do you see that hump on her?"

Nicht Wahr said that he did.

"Well, by the crackle of the galley fire, I believe that's a tin gun in there! It's a toy warship. Aha, ha, ha!"

"One gun," laughed the happy Wahr, with his admiral. "What luck!"

"Knock wood!" cried Ruhet, who was superstitious. They did this.

"Have — you — got — enough?" cried the great voice.

"What's he saying, Wahr?" asked Ruhet.

But Wahr hastened below to order the boat to pick up the children (so as not to show the admiral how little he knew) and delayed his return, so that no one — not even Nicht — could tell him.

"No matter," said Ruhet, "give her the starboard broadside. And be sure that you don't hit her. I don't want her spoiled. Give her fits! Skeer her so terribly that she'll come up like a little man and shake hands with us. Then we'll have her. And don't be too dinked polite!" And the great admiral poked his elbow into the ribs of his great gunner and laughed. "My, but I am

hungry!" he went on. "She may have a little luncheon aboard. Enough for one."

Wahr, just arrived on deck, haughtily gave Nicht the already given order to fire. But the impertinent, though accurate, Nicht said, "Our guns are not carrying that far, excellency," ignoring Wahr for his superior.

"What?" cried Ruhet, "you rump of a sacred cow! There is not a gun on this ship that will not shoot half a mile and kill at that, Wahr!"

"Precisely, sire," said Wahr, odiously.

"Excellency, you must take my word or his," cried the hot Nicht. "You cannot take both. One of us don't know."

"Take your choice," said Wahr to him.

"The little ship is precisely a mile away," said Nicht. "I have a good eye."

"Then," snarled the cunning Wahr, "if that be true, your majesty" — he would call the admiral such things sometimes as if by mistake when he was about to ask for something — or wanted to puff his superior up with pride — "your majesty will be certain to accomplish what you wish — the skeering and not the destruction of the plaything."

“By the curry — Fire — we are leaving her behind !”

The thirty-six guns spoke at the same moment with a noise which seemed to rend earth and sky — such was the practice of the gunners of the Tonans under the accurate and admirable Weiss Nicht.

“Now, then,” cried the Wise One, leaping to the bulwarks, “we will see whether I am right — or Nicht.”

V

AND SHOOT TO MAKE HOLES

THE little boat had disappeared.

“Aha!” cried Wahr, “aha!” and again “aha!”

Weiss Nicht only turned to port and waited for the smoke to drift away.

“But your dinked being right has lost me my toy. Dink you, Wahr.”

From the port bow came the voice of Nicht.

“Here is your toy, all O.K., sir.”

True enough, there she was!

“Wahr,” thundered Ruhet, “you are sailing this ship. What *are* you doing to her? Have you got her on a pivot? How does she turn in a second without me knowing anything about it?”

“Excellency, perhaps she has lost her rudder. I will have Weiswasser look. She certainly turns, as you say, without us knowing it.”

But the truth is that Wahr was troubled

in heart as he took the wheel that Weiswasser might go aft. For, unless the wind had changed suddenly, the ship could not have veered. He began to think of witchcraft.

"Excellency," said Weiss Nicht, who always had a better chance when Wahr was at the wheel or below, "our ship did not turn. That one dived under us."

"What!" roared Ruhet. "By the beard of a turnip, what do you take me for? Wahr, did you *hear* that? Aha, ha, ha!"

"I saw her sink on the starboard side, sir, and I saw her rise on the port side, sir," said Nicht, doggedly. "She is a magical ship."

"Nicht, let me tell you a little secret," said the admiral, with a laugh, "when a ship sinks she sinks, and there's an end to her — magic or no magic. The devil himself could not raise her again — let alone herself. But you would have me believe that you have seen this miracle. Well, go forward and tell in the fo'castle, no one is there!"

"Well, sir, you'll see, sir," said Weiss Nicht. "If I were you, I would fly from that craft. There is some magic there. Excellency, I be-

lieve it was none of our own gunners who clipped off the figurehead—I don't see how they could—but that magic thing."

"Aha, ha, ha!" laughed Ruhet. "How, Nicht? Did she fire herself at us? That's as easy as sinking herself and rising again. And let me tell you another little secret, Nicht. No cannon can be fired without smoke. And we have seen no smoke from her—even if she were big enough to carry a gun that would reach us. Why, Nicht, look at that gun there. With that on the deck with the toy she could not float a minute. Nicht—Nicht—poor chap—you must report to the doctor at once, aha, ha, ha!"

Nicht, much hurt, left the deck, and Ruhet laughed until the tears ran down his face.

But he stopped suddenly at last, for the ship trembled for an instant, and then it was known that the rudder post had been clipped away. And Weiswasser had gone with it.

Out on the water the little boat sat as placidly as a swan.

This was so serious that Ruhet would have stormed at the gunners. But he remembered

that none of his guns had been fired. Besides, he had no time. Another piece was clipped from the bow. Then, as quickly, another from the stern.

The ship now began to roll backward and forward, like a rocking-horse.

Out on the sea, apparently from the little craft, came the voice, so much greater than she: "Aha, ha, ha! Aha, ha, ha! Tonans ahoy! When you have had enough say so, and we'll stop! Otherwise we'll chop you into kindling."

"Well, by my mother's carpet slipper!" cried Ruhet, "it can't be any one on *this* ship!"

He looked skyward, then over the side, then off at the innocent toy. Nothing seemed to account for it.

Nicht Wahr left the useless wheel and came forward.

"Nicht Wahr," whispered Ruhet, "Nicht thinks that toy has had something to do with this magic."

"Sire, I told you —"

"Wahr, you're a liar," said the bluff Ruhet,

wrathfully. "You didn't know anything to tell me. You were never in Byzantium in your dinked life! You said you would get it for me. Well, why don't you do so instead of letting it get us—a little at a time? Now let me see if you are good for anything. I no longer want it. Destroy it. And quickly. Don't be too polite. Shoot to kill—or, at least, to make holes. Push the Tonans right up on her—so that you won't miss her!"

VI

WHO BROKE RUHET'S LEG?

THIS, as Wahr now began to suspect only too well, was an impossible commission. But with his well-known sycophancy he said, "So you shall, sire."

All the admiral answered was: "And then we'll try for the soup-spring and have something to eat — where do you suppose it is? — and put new ends on the ship —" forgetting that there was nothing more in sight now than there had been for a long time.

However, while Wahr was manœuvring the ship, in her crippled condition, to bring her broadside to the little craft, the clipping went on at stern and bow until the water began to enter in a disquieting stream. Ruhet ransacked for the fiftieth time a locker on deck about the mizzen-mast for some cake which had once been there. The ship would not come about. Wahr had nearly decided to

become sufficiently humble, in the absence of Nicht, to go on his knees and confess his first failure to the admiral, and then his apparent wisdom but real ignorance, when, to his surprise and delight, the little craft, seeming to apprehend his intention, put herself exactly in the best position for the broadside.

"My luck never deserts me," muttered Wahr, "even in such a dinked" — he loved to do and say the things his master did — "distressful time as this. I'll sink her yet. Now," he cried to Weiss Nicht, so that the admiral might hear, "I have made everything ready for you. Get your broadside off!"

"And, on your life, don't miss her!" added Ruhet.

The impudent Weiss Nicht knew Wahr well enough to be ready, and, on the instant, the broadside roared.

When the smoke cleared, the green craft had disappeared.

"By my uncle's —"

No one will ever know what wisdom the

admiral would have uttered; for, at that moment, the little thing reappeared, as Weiss Nicht had anticipated, on the other side of the ship, and he had made ready for her in order to affront Nicht Wahr.

"The starboard broadside!" he cried impudently, without waiting for Nicht Wahr's order. "Fire!"

With the accuracy of all their practice this one went as the rest had gone — harmlessly into the sea. The boat had dived once more. And Nicht had seen her do it!

This was Weiss Nicht's final test. It had been conceived and executed magnificently and scientifically, and it had failed. He went on deck, and with powder-blackened face made the following report: "Sire, it cannot be done. And the sooner we get out of the vicinity of that machine, the more of this ship will be left. I *saw* it *dive*!"

But at that moment he noticed that he was speaking to Wahr and not Ruhet.

"Where is the admiral, sir?" he asked.

"I thought *you* were he," said Wahr, with the evidence of guilt in his face.

"And I thought you were he," cried the gunner's mate, bravely.

"Where can he be?" said both.

Both were answered immediately by a groan from the middle of the ship — which sounded profane.

They found Ruhet there with a broken leg.

"Who broke my leg?" demanded Ruhet, savagely.

"Not I," said Wahr.

"Nor me," said Nicht.

At that moment Wahr picked up the tell-tale object of their unhappy admiral's undoing.

"It is one of our own balls," he said, with an odious glance toward Weiss Nicht. "Here is the name — Tonans."

"Oh, you villain!" cried Ruhet, shaking his fist at the unhappy gunner's mate. "You shall be hanged at the yard-arm for this. You were always mutinous, anyway."

But at that moment, as is the custom of mankind, curiosity overcame pain in Hier Ruhet, admiral, of the Iupiter Tonans.

"How did he get it here, Wahr?"

For a moment — just a moment — Wahr was stalled.

"Sire," he temporized, "I have been thinking —"

"Well, stop it and tell me how he got it here. That is what I want of you. Not reflections. Weren't you looking?"

"Sire," said Wahr, hastily, before he had time to form a real hypothesis, "the poor man fired two broadsides in quick succession. An unfortunate mistake of Weiss Nicht — due to his impudence in not awaiting my order to fire. Undoubtedly one of the cannons was underloaded, and its ball travelled so slowly that the ball from an overloaded cannon of the second broadside overtook it —"

"By my mother's nightcap!" cried Ruhet, in disdain. "Hah!"

"Then it must have collided with one of the balls from the other — er — ship —"

Hier Ruhet actually laughed Wahr to scorn.

"*That* may have happened," said Nicht. "Our balls travel slowly."

The clipping at bow and stern suddenly recommenced.

"She's at work again!" cried a sailor, in panic.

Indeed, panic was now rife all through the ship.

"Lift me up," said Ruhet; "I will study this magic at close quarters if I die for it. Be calm, men! You still have Hier Ruhet!"

They lifted him up.

"Men, how did she get there?" asked the admiral now of the common, ignorant sailors who came, terrified, and grouped themselves about him as their protector.

One of them said that she had jumped over them.

Another said that she had dived under them.

Yet others contended that she had wings—that she had fins—that she was not a ship, but an apparition.

Now, again, suddenly, the little boat began to sink.

"Now I shall see," said the wounded commander, doubtingly. "Perhaps, after all, we have punctured her below the water line, and she is a goner. If they call for help, have

the boats ready. Have them ready, anyhow. The fact is, we need a bit of help ourselves."

"And," ventured Nicht Wahr, dreamily, in an evil way he had, when he had been too much crossed, "they may have needles and thread."

"Nicht Wahr," said the commander, in ignorance of his irony, "do you know that I think that little thing is made of tin — perhaps several sheets nailed together?"

"Precisely, sire," said Wahr.

"Tin will sink," said the impudent Weiss Nicht, again on deck.

"And," went on Ruhet, ignoring the interruption, "the ball that broke my leg might have bounced against it and returned to this ship."

"Undoubtedly, sire," said the odious Wahr, with a triumphant leer at Weiss Nicht, "your great and original mind has reached the correct solution of our trouble, while we of lesser understanding foundered in seas of doubt and —"

"Impossible," cried Weiss Nicht, impudent

to the last. "I can prove that the trajectory —"

"What?" cried the commander of the Tonans. "This is no time for big words — or — or narrow jealousies. My leg is broke."

VII

POOH!

"I THINK your majesty has exactly defined the cause of your injuries," said the caustic Weiss Nicht, now in the style of Wahr.

"That much is settled then," said the admiral, "since you both agree. If it was only mended —"

Something tore through the ship. "A hole and nothing else!" sighed Hier Ruhet.

"Sire, I think we had better go," said Wahr; "we can do no further good here. And besides, you may be unfortunate with the other leg — and your majesty's hunger is not being satisfied. I believe the soup-spring lies S.S.W., Nicht."

"Very well, since you are so hungry," acquiesced the admiral, with immense testiness, "get what is left of the Tonans under way, and, for heaven's sake, don't get skeered! Be calm!"

This, with much distress and profanity by everybody, they endeavored to do. But, inasmuch as the little boat kept up its clipping, it was not easy. However, at length, a bit of sail was rigged, a drag attached for a rudder, and what was left of the Tonans stood feebly to the wind. The little craft seemed to wait and look curiously on.

And now and then they heard that huge voice laugh at them: "Ha, ha, ha! Ha, ha, ha!"

Nevertheless they were making headway. For the sails of the Tonans had not been clipped.

A slight boom was heard presently from the direction of the tiny boat, — the first they had heard, — though it was now nearly out of sight, and at once a strange missile ploughed its way through the Tonans from the stern, and stopped in the middle of the waist. It was of iron, conical, prettily made, ornamented with bright bands of metal, and about the size of Jawrge, the boots.

The entire ship's company gathered and viewed it curiously.



“ The entire ship’s company gathered and viewed it curiously ”

1874

"Stand me up on my good leg," cried Ruhet, as curious as Jawrge. "Now, where *did* that come from?" he demanded of the sailors, as if some of them had put it there. No one answered.

"Certainly it did not come from that little toy. She's out of sight."

Not a soul spoke.

"Well, by my father's strap—and the buckle on its end—never saw I such a lot of ninnikins, Nicht!"

"It came from yonder vessel," said Nicht. "Be careful; it contains the magic."

Ruhet laughed once more.

"Why, Nicht, here is another secret, — the last one I shall tell you: it is bigger than the little vessel. Aha, ha, ha!"

"That is the magic of it, master."

"However, it may be light," said Ruhet. "Lift it. Nothing but a tin can, perhaps a present—hah! a tin can sent to us with provisions! Open it. They are very prettily put up, if they are to eat."

Ruhet touched it.

"It is hot. And that suggests the soup-

spring. Open it. Wahr, is this the soup-spring, you rogue?"

Wahr looked wise.

Weiss Nicht withheld the men solemnly.

"Do not touch it. It is full of magic. It is that has done the clipping."

"Pooh!" said Wahr. "Pooh, sire!"

"Do you really think so?" whispered Ruhet, half believing Nicht. "Well, it will do no more. Over with it."

Two men — then ten men — then twenty men — grasped it.

"It is not soup, at all events," laughed Hier Ruhet.

"Aha, ha, ha!" echoed the odious Wahr — still looking wise. "Not soup!"

"Over with it! Quick!" cried the impudent Nicht, ignoring both his superior officers in his fear.

Each was about to administer a separate reprimand to the poor gunner's mate.

But at that moment it exploded.

“ SIS ”

“ SIS ”¹

I

WHERE THE ORCHARDS SMELLED

ONCE there were two old ladies who lived alone, in an old house with blue china and straight-backed chairs. And the key-note of that house (as every house has its key-note) was peace. I, who lived in a city, went there, now and then, to rest for a brief while in its peace and grow strong. For it was in the country, and all about it was the smell of orchards.

One of the beautiful old ladies was blind. The other was so frail that it seemed a marvel how she kept going. Yet they never rested, — in the fashion which I should have called rest, — but were always as sentinels on duty. I was sluggard enough to sigh, occasionally, for a reclining chair or a couch. There was no such thing in the house. There

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never had been. It was sufficient for them that their ancestors had had nothing of the kind. For this was the doctrine of their simple lives — to be no more than (and as much as possible what) their mother and their father had been; to hold all good which they had held good, and to call evil what they had called evil; then to lie beside them at the end.

There was a curious correlation between their several infirmities. They believed that God designed it so. The frail one was eyes, the blind one was strength — to both.

Now, you are not to suppose that they were moody and melancholy and sour. On the contrary, they loved laughter, and constantly laughed at the queer straits into which their limitations so often brought them; at the equally queer contrivances by which they were overcome. They laughed — yes — at themselves — gently — as they did all things.

And they believed every one of those curious things which no one believes nowadays — which are only gibed at. (And I am not sure that they who gibe are more wise than they who believe — are you ?) There were certain

signs of the zodiac, movements of the constellations, phases of the moon, and meteorological conditions for the doing of everything — from the medication of mortal illness to the planting of beets in their little garden. And they knew, and scrupulously propitiated, every influence for good or evil luck.

Nevertheless they were curiously modern in thought and attitude — fresh — young — interested.

They liked my glittering automobile with its snorting terrors, and recalled Mother Shipton's prophecy concerning it. But they would not ride in it. Not because they did not trust it and me, but because they instinctively knew that they would create an unpicturesque anachronism. They understood that they belonged to the world of 1850.

Yet they adored children — and the more modern their dress and manners the more they loved them. When the youngsters came (they were always being invited — inveigled, in fact), the shutters were flung wide as if the sisters said: "Yes, the shadows are for us. But the sunshine is for you!"

Still nothing in that house was of a childish sort — except those children's clothes packed away in the garret. It was here that they would spend their holidays. Sitting on the floor they would open the chests which were before trunks, and the fragile one would put the tiny garments into the hands of the blind one — piece after piece — and chatter softly :

"Hiliary's, you know."

"Oh, yes! The one with the blue-fringed ruffles," the blind one would answer.

"Mildred's little patchwork quilt."

"She was three, then."

"Yes. She sat in the little rocker to sew."

"Yes — it had *blue* pinks painted on the back."

"She used to say that she couldn't sew except in the little rocker."

They would both laugh at that.

"And she would rock furiously!"

"Yes, and *sew* that way! Feel these savage stitches!"

"And sing!"

"Yes."

The frail one would sing, then, in a small, quavering voice; and if she had not to cry too much, the blind one would join in the song—especially in the refrain—with an alto that went wrong more often than right—as they say it did when she sang in the choir. For both of them used to sing in the choir. And they still loved music. Sometimes, sitting behind their thick, black veils, in the corner of the faded church no one ever took from them, they would hear the old organist play (they let him do so whenever the young lady had a headache), “Fading, Still Fading.” Then they would reach out and hold each other by the hand. For that had been a famous duet of theirs. In fact, they still yearned to sing whenever they heard it. But that would not do. Only the choir sang now.

Did I tell you that the husband of the frail one had died in 1860, and that they had both worn mourning for him ever since? It was he who had used, sometimes, to invent a third part to their duet—a tremendous bass.

The other precious thing in this garret was a trousseau. Once I saw a bonnet of white

silk — made coal-scuttle fashion — shirred (I think that is the name) — and with a simple red rose inside where it nestled against thick brown hair and cheeks with pink spots in them — at least so they are all pictured in the old daguerreotype taken at Philadelphia.

And there was a wondrous silk dress of a wide stripe — white, with just a dash of pink in the *moiré*. It could be worn to-day. It is not cut at all. But it is much more soft and gentle — this fabric woven only by worms and human hands — than those woven on power-looms. Then there was a pair of satin slippers with strings to cross over the ankles, and a marvellous petticoat — all feather-stitching! A veil, too, turned quite yellow now, which had always wrapped some sprays of flowers, the stems of which only remained. But one could see that they had been orange-blossoms — *mock-orange* blossoms. They grew in the front yard of the two old ladies — when they were not *old* ladies at all. They grow there still. Mock-orange blossoms.

There was, too, a pair of stockings, which, I was often told, had come straight from

London. Think of that! They had pink clocks at the sides ending in rosebuds. After that the trousseau was of intimate things I may not mention — and which I never saw — perhaps could not name — for when these were likely to be uncovered the lid of the chest was softly, deprecatingly closed in my face. But I know that they were infinitely adorned.

II

THE EYES THAT WEPT TILL THEY WENT BLIND

THEIR conversation has been going on all the while they have sat there on the floor. Listen :

“I wore this on my wedding journey. Brides did that then.”

“A bride wished it known that she was a bride in those days, didn’t she?”

“Yes, indeed. She was proud of it. Not ashamed.”

“It was your first railroad journey?”

“Yes. There was only one railroad in this part of the country then. And it was a long time before the people got reconciled to travelling so fast. Each one expected never to get back alive. But we went all the way to Philadelphia on it. And it took only three days. There was lots of smoke from the engine. Even Hiliary preferred the stage. But I — Here a small cinder burnt a hole.”

The blind one would feel it.

"You looked very pretty then, sis. I saw you — *go*."

Sis would not reply. There was not a spark of vanity in her. But she was very pretty at that moment. And there were the Philadelphia daguerreotypes to prove that she was pretty in 1857.

"We were married only three years."

We! It meant the *three* of them.

It was this the blind one thought of most. Remember that when we finally get to the story.

"Yes, Hiliary died in 1860."

And then the memory of the frail one would pass the gulf of all those years and she would touch the blind one with a caress.

"And when we got home again you had lost your sight!"

"Yes."

"But, sis, it *wasn't* because you were so lonely and cried so much! It *couldn't* have been *that!*"

It was the question she had begged a thousand times. And the answer she was to have she had had as often:

"No."

"For crying, no matter how much, will never hurt the sight?"

"No."

"I don't think Doctor Massey ever understood your case."

"Oh, yes."

"Well, he let it go until it was too — There are better doctors now. They would know?"

"Perhaps."

"But it's too late, isn't it?"

The answer, too, she had always had to this, while she had always hoped, and always would, for a different one:

"Yes — it's too late. It was to be so."

"But you *were lonely*, dear sis? I wouldn't like to think that you were not."

"Oh, yes!"

"The neighbors said that the shutters weren't opened all the while we were away."

"What was the use?"

"And they *heard* you cry."

"Well, of course! We had never been separated before."

"And I was so happy that I didn't even think that you might be unhappy. But you've forgiven me for that."

"I was happy, too — for your happiness, sis, dear."

"Then *why* did you cry so? That I never *will* understand."

Nay, that the frail one would never understand until she should reach that Heaven where all the secrets of the earth are revealed. For it was here alone that the blind one had never been quite frank. Always she had answered, always she would answer, until they faced each other in that Heaven :

"People cry for joy as well as for sorrow, sis, dear."

"But not so hard that they lose their eyesight."

"When one is worried the weakest part goes first. And the doctor said it was that way with me. My eyes were weak." And then the fatalistic refrain : "It had to be."

"But, sis, dear, *why* did you *worry*?"

"About you."

I think she had told this gentle lie more

than a thousand times. But I am sure that the recording angel has not got it down against her once.

"But *I* was happy."

"Yes — *you* — were — happy — dear — dear sis."

"And so you never saw me after that — nor Hiliary, nor the babies —"

"But, sis, dear, I could *touch* you all, and *hear* your voices, and there was so much to remember. You know that I was happier after my blindness than before."

"Yes, I know. And I cannot understand *that*."

That, too, she would know only in that One Place where there are no secrets.

III

THE GOLDEN TEAPOT WITH THE BLUE ROSE

Now they had a teapot. It had come, like everything else in that house, from their ancestors. It was not like their other china, blue, but golden — a coppery gold under an iridescent glaze that made it look like real gold at a little distance. And this teapot was not tall — and commonplace. It was low and long from handle to spout — and oval — with vertical fluting. And on each side was sculptured an imposing medallion within which was a blue rose.

Always, when they sat at meat, this was between the two dear old ladies. And the one groped for it so perilously — in a certain affright — and the hand of the other trembled so when she poured from it, that I often interposed. Alas! it was more to preserve than to help; for you have perceived, no doubt, that I coveted the teapot.

However, the old ladies were embarrassed by my help. They wanted to pour their tea for themselves, as their grandmother had done, out of this same pot. Nevertheless, they suffered my assistance with a grace which I remember even now for its gentleness.

IV

THE STORY AT LAST. ATTEND!

THEN, upon an idle day, searching one of the big stores in my city for a gift for them, I came upon the self-pouring teapot — not unmindful of the peril of the other one. I explained to the too polite clerk that I wanted something for my dear old ladies, and he assured me that I had discovered precisely the thing — that it had been invented with dear old ladies constantly in mind: the while he had been giving me the most deft “demonstration” I had ever beheld. Each act kept pace with some telling phrase.

It was a huge, mechanical thing, of which, if one depressed a cylinder, the air was forced out of the spout, and ahead of it flowed the tea. The name of it was “Eureka.”

I bought it and had the monograms of the dear old ladies graven unreadably on its triple-plated sides.

On the day of its presentation I noticed a certain lack of joyousness in the gift. But I explained that to myself by the appalling shining imprudence of the thing in the midst of their chaste colorlessness. I labored industriously to quench its brilliance by passing my hands over it at every opportunity. But the servant — alas! there was one now — invariably brought it to the table in a renewed state of polish which maddened me. However, I taught them how to "work" the machine, and they diligently learned; so that whenever I came it was religiously used, though with a retrogression of skill at which I marvelled until I learned from the maid that it was used *only* when I was there, and in my absence was made immaculate, packed in its cotton wool, and put away in its gaudy box.

Unhappily the blind one lifted the thing heavily to pour from it one day. I restrained her. She flushed a little and said:

"I can't and *can't* seem to get used to it. Seems as if I *must* do it as grandmother did — which is ridiculous."

"Why, God bless you!" I cried, "and so

you shall. We will throw the thing into the yard. I hate it!"

They were both so stricken with horror at my passion that I did not — but I swear that that is the only reason.

To comfort me the frail one said: "We — we're very fond of it, you know. I don't suppose *your* teapot has a story?"

Do you observe that she unconsciously said *your* teapot?

I at once fancied the hideous history of the hideous mechanism. A hissing, grinding factory!

"No," I answered, adopting her phrase of proprietorship, "*my* teapot has no story."

But then I added, "Has yours?"

Some guilty exchange passed between the two old ladies in the occult way which needs no speech. And the mystery of the bit of clay was deepened. Most things (save the patent teapot) are not new. But I am sure that this question had never before been asked them.

"Yes," said the frail one, with the assent of the other.

"I guess you may tell him," said the blind one, huskily, looking down.

The frail one looked almost aghast.

"Why, sis!" she said breathlessly. And then, to me, "It is the first time she has ever let me tell it."

"*He* won't laugh," said the blind one — and therein voiced an affection for me of which I shall always be glad.

Do you wonder that I hastened her to her story? Perhaps you are glad that I am at last come to it. Yet all I have said belongs together if it were properly told.

Now attend!

V

HILIARY LOVED BOTH AND BOTH LOVED HIM

“IN 1757,” the frail one began, “everything was different from what it is now — you can’t imagine *how* different. There was no money like our national bank-notes. The money of the United States was gold and silver coin. There was state money — ‘shinplasters,’ they were called — and such things. But most of the money was the private notes of bankers, and no one ever knew whether they were good or bad. So they were always uncertain, and people who wanted money to keep would get it in gold or silver pieces. Sis and I had a little money from our mother’s estate — two thousand dollars each — and the teapot. They gave it to us in twenty-dollar gold pieces, mine of 1837, and sis’s of 1836 — the dates of our birth. I think one could get them stamped at the Mint that way in those days. Anyhow, these came from the Philadelphia Mint.”

See how badly my old lady tells a story ! She jumps straight from the coins to Hiliary.

"Sis and I never knew which of us Hiliary loved. He came to see us both — and, in fact, the whole family. And everybody liked him, and he liked everybody. But it seemed pretty certain that he would ask one of us to marry him. So sis and I (we were living here alone then — father having died the year before) laughingly considered that we would probably not need more than one trousseau (for Hiliary was the only beau we both had), and that we would put into the teapot all that we could spare for that purpose and not count it until Hiliary had asked one or the other of us — then she was to have it all. Whenever we had a levy or a fi'-penny-bit to spare, we would drop it into the teapot. Sis put in twice to my once, I am sure, because I had what they called a sweet tooth in my head, and brother Ben said that syrup water, which you could get at the groceries then, was the only thing that was good for it."

The blind one stopped the story to explain something she thought was not plain to me :

"We thought we could only *afford* to have one wedding between us, you know."

"Why, weren't there plenty of suitors?" asked I.

"I guess there was only one for both of us — and his name was Hiliary," smiled the frail one.

Then she went on:

"One night Hiliary was here, and sis and I were sitting in these two chairs, close together, as if we were afraid of him (we always sat that way when he was here). I remember that I had on my blue-flowered delaine, and sis had on her black Swiss with the green sprigs in it, just as we are in that first daguerreotype at the left-hand corner of the parlor mantel. Hiliary had just shown sis one of the new coins of 1857.

"‘Well,’ he laughed, ‘I want to marry one of you girls, but hanged if I know which one to ask. You are both mighty lovely. I believe I’ll turn Mormon.’

"But I thought he shied off toward sis there as he said it, and I never felt so lonely in my life as I did for a second or two then.

"‘Now, you are taller than sis, here, but she is plumper — and I like both. Your eyes are the same — there is no choice there. But sis’s hair is a bit redder — and I like that. It shows a spirit. And I don’t want to be the whole thing when I marry. But *you* are extravagant,’ he said to me, ‘and I don’t like that, because I’m poor, and a wife must help her husband to get along.’

"I thought again that he moved a bit more toward sis, there — who was hiding the coin.

"Just then sis cried : ‘Heads for me, tails for sis. Which is it? Hurry ! hurry !’

"‘All right,’ said Hiliary, laughing.

"Sis turned up the coin — and it was — me !

"She jumped up and ran away laughing, then, and Hiliary sat still quite a while, as if he weren’t exactly sure. I was hanging my head ashamed and afraid. But then he laughed and put his arms around me and kissed me. He was a little bashful.

"‘I guess God put that into sis’s head,’ he said.

"That is another thing people believed then — that God commanded things in that way,



“I want to marry one of you girls, but hanged if I know which one to ask.”



and that one would be disobeying Him not to do them.

“My, but I was happy ! I didn’t know till that instant that I cared so much for him. I must have fainted for a few minutes. When I came to, sis was there again with something damp on my face. At first I couldn’t see. I heard Hiliary say, ‘But what if it had been *you ?*’

“ ‘I wouldn’t have had you,’ said sis.

“ ‘You would have broken your word ?’

“ ‘Certainly — rather than marry *you !*’

“ ‘Oh !’

“ ‘I’m looking for some one *better* than you — *better* in every way !’

“ ‘But you would have been going against God, maybe ?’

“ ‘Not even then. I want some one — *better !*’

“ But poor sis never found her better one — though I suppose there was one for her somewhere — as she deserved. For she couldn’t look for him nor see whether he was better or worse than Hiliary if he had come. She lost her sight. But I’m a little ahead of my story.

"That night I heard sis saying strange things in her sleep and sobbing. She told me the next morning that it was for me — because we had to part —"

"And you said," the blind one interrupted, "that we should *never* part."

"And you insisted that it was impossible to live together after I was married, that three was a crowd, and that you should go and keep house for brother Ben."

"I only said I should go mad."

"Yes, only think! What *could* you have meant?"

The knowledge of that would have to wait, too, until the heavens are rolled together as a scroll.

"Anyhow, sis said — it was early in the morning and we were not dressed yet — that we had better go down and see how much was in the teapot, and we did.

"There was not a cent in it!

"We never knew when it had been stolen. Perhaps long before. But it was all gone!"

VI

SHE BELIEVED IN MIRACLES. DO YOU?

SHE approached the next part of her story diffidently.

"Maybe you will not care for the rest. I know you don't believe in signs."

"But I do," I protested.

She brightened with delight. The blind one said nothing. I think her head bent a trifle lower.

"And do you believe that God helps those who love Him when they are in distress?"

"Yes," I said, "and some who do not love Him as well as you do. He has helped *me* — when I did not deserve it."

She gazed a moment in wonder.

"I don't mean indirectly?"

"Directly!" I said.

"But you surely do not believe in" — she halted, ashamed of the ancient word for an instant, then bravely put it at me — "miracles"?

"I have *seen* miracles."

And I told her of some that I had seen.

Do you suppose that I would cast a shadow of doubt upon so precious a heritage? A believer in miracles! I thanked God after I had heard the end of her story that I need not. Don't *you* believe in miracles? Don't we all constantly expect the impossible? And if we do not believe in miracles, how can we expect that? And doesn't the impossible often happen? Well then!

"I wouldn't like to tell you if you would laugh."

"I am more likely to cry," I said.

Alas! I fear that she did not quite trust my hyperbole. She continued carefully:

"Well — then — comes the — mystery. There was no way except to pray for it. You know people — especially women — believed more in the efficacy of prayer then than they do now — they used to think of that first. And my heart was almost broken, for I had spent nearly all my money, and that was my only hope for a trousseau — and, of course, no girl can be married without one —

her husband would have no respect for her. At least that is what was thought then. So every night I prayed, but no miracle happened. Then one night I slipped out of bed, where I could do nothing but think of it, and came downstairs to pray so that I would not disturb sis. As I prayed I heard coin rattle into the old teapot! I lit a candle (I had been in the dark) and ran in to look. (It was only in the closet in the next room.) I could not lift the teapot down — it was so heavy. At last, when I got it off the shelf, it slipped out of my hands, and was only saved from destruction by falling on the thick rug at the hearth. It was then that it was cracked. But the gold pieces fell and rolled about in a veritable shower. My candle went out. I let them all lie, and rushed up to wake sis. It was hard to do — she was sleeping so soundly. But when I could make her understand, she was as surprised and happy as I was.

“We lit another candle and stole down and closed the shutters and locked the doors and gathered them all up. There were exactly

one hundred twenty-dollar gold pieces. Only think! And all were stamped 1836.

"‘Oh, sis,’ I said, ‘some one has stolen *your* money!’

"‘If any one went to the trouble to steal my money, he would keep it, not present it to you, never fear! Mine is safe at the bank.’

"And sure enough, when she went down to see, the next morning early — for she was very anxious — it was all there, quite safe, drawing its seven per cent. For sis had put hers there from the first, and used only the interest. And at that time a hundred and forty dollars a year was enough for a girl to live on very well. But I had spent my all in what Hiliary called riotous living.

"I thought, at first, we ought to make it known through the paper. But sis said that if any one had been robbed of that money, *he* would be the person to make it known, as he certainly would, and that to talk of it in that way was to doubt that it was a miracle.

"I have never doubted that. But I did watch the paper for a long time."

VII

THAT WAS A GREAT TIME FOR KISSING

“YOU have seen my poor old trousseau. But it was the finest that could be had here in those days. Sis and I did most of the sewing — or rather sis did it. That was the custom then. And she cried more than I did over it, and was more pale and shaky at the ceremony. She was my bridesmaid. But we all lived happily together afterward. I think sis was more happy than either Hiliary or me. And she was more of a wife to him than I was; more of a mother to my babies than I was. It seemed more her vocation than mine. The only unhappy thing about it — the only terrible thing in all our lives — was when we came home so happy, with a miniature of us that we had painted in Philadelphia for her, to have sis led out of the dark parlor with a black bandage over her eyes and to be told that she was — blind!

"*Blind!* I remember now how she put her hands all over my face and said that she could *feel* the happiness — and not to cry. But she didn't want to touch Hiliary. He had come in laughing and calling for her first. For, as I told you, she had been the happy one — not I!

"When *he* saw her, he just held her hands as if he had turned to stone, and the tears ran down his face — the first I had ever seen him shed. And then he kissed her. He had never kissed her before, though I wouldn't have minded it. Those were greater times for kissing than these.

"‘She must never go away from us,’ he said to me in an entire change of voice. In fact, whenever he spoke to her after that it was so. ‘And nothing must ever mar her happiness. She is ours.’

"Of course we were all crying, no one could speak another word — so that there was nothing to do but put our arms about her — and keep her — and make her happy — which we did — didn't we, sis?"

"Yes," whispered the blind one.

Then fell a long pause in which three minds travelled back to that beautiful old time and lived its happiness over again.

"It is very funny — what the blind can do if they like. Sis would darn the stockings, nurse the babies, teach them their lessons, tie Hiliary's stock better than he could, or I, feel in his pocket to see whether he had always a handkerchief, do *everything* for him — and let *me* go gadding. It was the very luckiest thing for Hiliary that she never married. For it took both of us to be a wife to him — and sis was more than her share of her.

"And," ended the frail one, "we are very thankful — for we have had everything we wanted. Only, when Hiliary died, my heart would have broken except for sis, for you know sis is brave, oh, sis is *very* brave — braver than I!"

"Yes," I echoed, "sis is very brave — braver than you!"

I looked at the blind one; and I am sure that she knew what I was thinking. Her face was still turned to her plate. But

high on the cheeks a flush mounted, as I looked, which might be guilt—or something else. And I fancied a tear under each eyelid which she dare not shed nor wipe away. Poor sis!

And the face of the other one was flushed, too. But I knew very certainly that meant joy. For her beautiful dark eyes looked straightly and happily into mine. Yet—there were tears there, too!

And so you see that the saying of the dear old lady is once more proven true. People cry for joy.

I reached across the table, scattering the teacups as I went, and took a hand of each.

"A beautiful story," I said.

"It is the first time," said she, happily, who had told it so badly. "I didn't think I could tell a story. But somehow I was just carried along."

"It shall never be told again," I said, "unless you permit it."

But I pressed the hand of the blind one, slowly, gently, until her head drooped a little further and she responded:

"Not until we are both dead."

I have kept the faith. They are both dead.

And I will not put into printed words the thoughts of my mind. I will not spoil the story of the dear old ladies by making it orderly and conventional. For fifty years the frail one had believed in the mystery of it — had even seen God in it. A miracle! How unquestioning was faith then! How simple was she!

But I may tell you what I see, here, as I write.

First, that other one, with sudden understanding turning the coin, like an accomplished palmist! Then again, stealing down the stairs in her white night garments, after her sister, and hearing that prayer of agony — then back — for that money — all prepared — because of the earlier prayers — but halting — then, finally, to bed, like a wraith, pretending sleep, having made the supreme sacrifice of her small life.

And I can see her the next day, swearing that prim-faced old banker, in his dusty

office, to eternal silence and untruth—an oath he kept with faith.

I wish I might *not* see her putting aside forever that trousseau—the wedding journey—the little hoard. For these meant that *she* had been *sure* of Hiliary. And, perhaps, that she and her sister were afterward to part for *her* wedded happiness. Was it not best as it happened?

And those sobs—I do not like to hear them—so terrible as to deprive her of her sight. The while she had to think of *them* in the light and she forever in the dark. And alone! Alone! But it is good to know—is it not?—that they truly lived happy ever after—that the end of all was joy? That she lived with him she loved and who loved her all the rest of his life—in the sound of his voice—in the touch of his hands—in all the gentleness of him—all the more intimately in that she was blind? For she might touch him then as she pleased—and it was his duty to protect her—sometimes he might kiss her. For you will remember that the other one

did not mind. And that those were greater times for kissing than these.

And do you think that she darned even his stockings — something that touched his living body — without leaving on them a kiss or a caress? I do not. And wasn't it splendid to live in the only happiness there was for her — or ever could be — by reason of that one great sacrifice! That she might rear his children, who was to be mother to none! That she might be almost a wife to him — who was to be wife to no one! That she was to have the very comradeship her soul desired because she was blind — not otherwise!

And, best and greatest and sweetest of all, that she for whom it all was — the sorrow — the penance — the sacrifice — would never know till she should reach that Heaven where her knowledge would only be blotted out by the greater joy it would bring — there, where there is neither marrying nor giving in marriage, but where the Lamb is the one bridegroom!

VIII

WHAT MAY BE SEEN ON A DOORSTEP

WHEN the last one — the frail one — died, the teapots were sent to me in the city. (Had they, do you think, known of my covetousness all the while?) The one is wrapped in some soft, old, yellowed tissue which might have been with the trousseau. It smells faintly of dead rose-leaves. The little crack is neatly filled with fresh putty. Two of the worst chippings have been carefully built up and modelled with the same material. The other is resplendent in its original cotton-wool and rests in its box.

Only a little while ago I was passing a man's back door. On the step was a patent teapot. It was not splendid, but like a person in evil circumstances. And I am sorry to say that I was glad — as I ought *not* to be in the case of a *person* in evil circumstances. He was pressing upon an

air piston and expelling kerosene to fill a lamp.

I stopped, and smiled, and said :

"‘Eureka?’"

"‘Eureka!’" he echoed, smiling also.

"It seems good—for kerosene," I said.

"It is very good—for kerosene," he replied.

"But not for dear old ladies," I thought, as I passed on.

And so I tell this little story—or the old ladies do—because I wish that no one may ever again buy a new teapot for old ladies. They may have an old one with a story. But in case any one unthinkingly should, I have provided a better use for it—or the man on his back doorstep has. I have always wished that I had met him—on his doorstep—earlier.

THOR'S EMERALD

THOR'S EMERALD

I

THE SHIBBOLETH OF LIBERTY

FAR out, toward the eternal ice cap, there was once a spot of earth so glowing with delicate verdure that it was called Thor's Emerald. One can scarce imagine how it came there, unless, indeed, it dropped, by some celestial mischance, from a Titanic diadem. It lay bedded between the sea and mountain, and overlooked by the glacier. Yet, these enemies were kept at bay by a south wind rifled from an inconstant current which visited the fjord. Fair to the eye, it was a Dead Sea apple. One might grind one's heel into the soil and find the primeval shingle left by the receding waters. And, always, there had been the threat of the glacier. For, when the inconstant current should cease, at the bar itself was making

before the mouth of the fjord, the glacier would come down.

It was scarce fivescore acres. Yet it has its little history, whose beginning no man knows, whose end it is mine to relate.

In the dim past some castaways had here found a good refuge from the icy waters, and, having no hope of another country, had here set up their households. Their names perished. But their descendants, bound to the soil by an heredity stronger than either will or circumstance, kept their graves on the mountain side, which outnumbered many times the living.

For, each year, the sea and the glacier claimed their several victims.

The narrow strip of beach which led out to the south had been wider in the time of the castaways. Yet none had cared to pass by it into the better world that lay beyond — nor did they sail to it across the sea which had been so deadly to them all.

Thus the sum of their lives had been compassed in the Emerald of Thor. The sum of their necessities had ever been to keep life within and covering without their bodies.

And these simple things had been hard to accomplish always. For the glacier encroached when the bar and the ice kept the warm current away, and the fish went with the current.

That duress of fear, which held the castaways, had passed upon their children. They coveted no more of the world than they saw about them. I think they scarce knew, in the passage of time, that there was else to the world than what they had.

In time this became patriotism. It was their unwritten treason to wish for another country.

This life, too, isolated in the deep heart of nature, had bred a habitude as simple as nature itself. They were true because they knew no falsehood. They were good because for them there was no evil. Wrong was the simple negation of right and needed no defining for the simple. Each had the obsession of it.

More and more precarious had their life become. In the last winter the ice had hung over them with an ominous menace. The current which was to bring their little sum-

mer was delayed very long, the fish were gone, and hunger come, so that they had begun to look each other in the eyes and ask :

“ Brother in the Lord, is it now ? ”

For this was with them always — this certainty of their blotting out.

But suddenly, almost in an hour, the summer came. The fish returned with opulence. The ice receded with muttered curses. The streams fell down from it, the harvest grew, and there was a song on every happy lip.

It was their last harvest. For, when it was gathered, and the winds were become chill, they hastened into the boats and out to sea, that they might have their winter's fish before the glacier came back.

All went who could, but Christof and Christine, who, though yearning to go, were commanded to remain and care for blind Agra and simple Lars, the old and the maimed and the little children.

“ For, Brother in the Lord,” said the priest, when he had doffed his vestments and put on his smock, “ we may not return, and thy charge is, therefore, greater than ours. Be-

hold, I adjure thee, that thou care for them well."

And Christof answered that he would. Whereupon the priest put his arms about his shoulders and kissed his forehead, in their simple way, and said:

"As thou doest unto them, so will the Lord to thee. We trust in thee."

Christof again answered with assent. For always on their going forth was this charge committed to some one.

But there was something greater yet.

"And, more than all," charged the priest, with solemn affection, "we leave thee and Christine, that there may be successors in our land; that the graves may be kept; that until, in the time of God, this land shall be blotted from the earth by the ice, there shall be lips to praise Him, and souls to pray to Him. Life is a hard thing here, yea! But it would not be so if God had not so ordained it. Therefore are we God's children, therefore do we obey him. For had He no purpose in keeping us here, He would have found for us another land. Dost thou believe this?"

"All this I believe," said Christof.

"Thou art the bravest, and Christine the most splendid, our little race has yet produced. We see in thee, again, all that our fathers were who lived amidst the ice, when the world was new. For that we save and keep thee, that the issue of your loins may be the noblest in our little world. But in thee we see oftentimes, with sorrow, the spirit of unrest. Thou hast said that thou wouldst wish to try thy brawn out in that world we know lies yonder. Thou hast said that thou art great as any there. That much is true. Yet be not deceived. There is no world for thee but this. There never can be. God in His thought designed it so. Thou canst not escape God's purposes. Dost thou believe this, too?"

And Christof bowed his head.

"Wilt thou, then, obey the law, and keep and do all this which I have charged?"

And Christof answered:

"Yea."

"If thou dost not," the priest said, "I do fear the things that will come upon thee and

our land. Yet I am sure thou wilt. I go forth with an even heart. And all—all of thy brethren—go forth with peace in their hearts because of thee. And, now, farewell, and all the grace of God Almighty stay with thee,—so, farewell.”

He kissed the head of Christof.

And Christof answered, as the custom was :

“Fare thee all well, my Brother in the Lord,” and kissed his head.

“Fare thee all well,” the priest said again. “If we return no more, thou wilt be governor and priest, and father and mother to thy country—to the old and young, the simple and the maimed. And so, again, beloved Brother in the Lord, be faithful—and fare thee all well.”

So they went forth to fish, and the sea rose mightily between them and the land, so that they came not back for many days. And, even then, their wrecked boats came in before them, wherefore, like a tender message in advance of death, Christof and Christine knew.

Yet, all came back, each one, as if at the end they would not be denied their land.

But on each face the purple hue of death had long since passed. And Christof and Christine, and Simple Olaf and blind Agra, and the little children, dug their graves on the mountain side.

II

WHEN THE SUMMER CAME AGAIN

Now, when the little fickle summer came again, — and the next year it was splendid, — two young gentlemen sauntered up the sea road to Thor's Emerald and inquired, in something very like their language, for food and a guide into the mountain and the glacier.

They got food, such as it was, — goat's milk and flad bröd, — from Christine's hands, and Christof was their guide — there was none else. And there could be none better. For his childhood had been spent on the glacier and the mountain. He had begot a legend for each crag his fathers had neglected to provide with one.

So he led the daring young gentlemen from the south up into the most sacred of his caves and eyries, and, in the doing, found a wondrous pleasure. They were his age and he loved them ; they loved him.

He was the Viking to them — archaic as if born a thousand years before. Upon the

mountain he was the animal snuffing rare air. Upon the glacier he was untamed liberty — unassailable as the nature in which it grew. Precisely these were the young travellers to him. For they filled the camp at twilight, and, long after it, the fantastic embers, with the magnificent ghosts of the world from which they came — of which Christof heard now first — treasuring every word.

One evening as he came into camp with the wood he had hardly gathered for their evening fire, the rocks were echoing for the first time in their hoary existence "The Star-Spangled Banner." The Norseman did not understand the song, but he caught the spirit of the singers. The fire was not made. He leaned, rapt, against a crag, with bared head, while they sang it for him in his own language. After that they sang it often together so that he learned it. And, now and then, it came back to them in his almost terrible Norsk words, where he shouted it to the listening mountains. It had taken an almost religious hold upon the guide's fancy.

It was exactly a week when they returned. They ate once more of the little store of flad bröd, were blessed by the blind Agra, and went, singing "The Star-Spangled Banner," back along the sea road, as they had come, loath to leave the young Viking who had stepped out of the tenth century for them.

He watched them out of sight and then choked in his throat. For, at the waving of their hands, where the road was lost to view, all that largess of which they had communed was gone. He thought to run and follow them, but he heard a song — yet turned and strode the beach with a great exultation. The song came nearer, but not more rapidly than his resolution crystallized. And when she who sang came in sight of him, he was looking obliviously out upon the booming ocean, his hand above his eyes, as if trying to pierce the misty horizon which baffled his vision, and where lay that exulting world of liberty.

And she who sung was glad to see him thus. For he was the goodliest being she had ever had in her heart. His tunic was a black

wolf's skin — his legs were swathed in other skins — the fur turned in — and gartered with strips of furred hide — about his neck was a string of wolf's teeth — on his feet were huge shoes of skin such as his robe — his hair was fair and long — his head was never covered.

She ceased her song and came before him. Yet he gazed.

"Soul of my soul, what seest thou?" she asked.

He came back with a sigh and smile for her.

"'The Land of the Brave and the Home of the Free.'"

"Nay, for that thou wouldst look at thy feet. For thou standest on the land of the brave. And the home of the free is yonder."

"The land of a despot," he laughed, "asking all, giving naught."

"Then thou art its despot — for it is thy land — thou art its king. Oh, it is small I grant! But it is ours. No other land can ever be. Our fathers dying gave it to us."

"See!" he cried, turning what the travellers had given him into a prodigal golden shower from his srip upon the ground.

"What is it?" asked the girl.

"Money. Gold! Enough to take me to their land. They said so."

"To their land? You?"

At once great fear fell on her.

"It is naught. A little journey by the sea road — a week — and one is there! They come and go each summer. They will come again the next."

"But thou — thou wilt not go?"

"I will," he nodded.

"Forsake thy country?"

"Yea."

"That was our fathers' basest treason."

He laughed.

"And thou hast sworn to the priest —"

He laughed again.

"But evil will come from the breach of thy solemn oath — it must. God is not mocked."

"I have not said that I will break my oath, nor do a treason, beloved one," he said. "Can one not go and see this wondrous land?"

"Yea. But temptation is in thine eyes."

He laughed and sighed and answered :

"Yea!" — fingering the strange coins.

Then, tempting her also, he said :

"Come with me thence?"

"I?"

The one little word told him how impossible that was.

"Yea, there are the old and blind and simple to be cared for. I forgot."

"I covet not that land, my Christof," said she, "nor any other land than this."

"Beloved," said he, solemnly, "our fate draws so near that I can see it. The ice can little longer be held back. And that is death to us and to our small land."

"Yea," said she, almost happily.

"Thou dost not wish to live?"

"I? I would live forever, asking but one thing — thy love. Yet, I will die here willingly, because all that I know is here — all life — all death — all joy — all hope and fear. Why, it is not hard, dear love. We have been born to it. Each morning we look first up at the glacier to read if we shall live that day."

"Our fathers have done ill to keep us here. Ill to stay themselves. What is there here?"

He swept the air with his hand. The sun was setting on the glacier. The mountain seemed all gold. The sea was saffron.

She saw all this and said:

"The very beauty of the Lord is here!"

"A glacier to bury us. Beloved, in a little time the ice will be where we stand. There will be no harvests. No fish. What then? This has been threatened us for many years. But now it comes soon. All creatures but us have fled. And I must find ye first another land, then must ye all fly with me. And I will find it in this rich, this just, this righteous America. That is not wrong."

She hung her head and sighed.

"What is it in thy mind?" he asked.

All her body flushed in blushes as she answered:

"Thou didst say that when the harvest was taken thou wouldst marry me."

"Yea," he cried, touching her, "and that is now! Come to Agra. And when we are married, thou thyself shalt send me forth to

seek a home for thee and them that hang on us—in this new land.”

She was not glad for this, yet all her heart sung at being his wife.

“I am so happy that I will not say thee nay to-day—though I would keep thee here to die and sleep upon the mountain with our fathers—though it were but a little while. Yet if thou wilt—why—yes, go—I send thee.”

“Ah, ah,” he cried, “that is like the Viking ladies of the olden time! This country where I go and all its boundlessness are mine and thine and all who come alike. And all its wealth and houses. I will go in haste, and when I have found a pretty nest for thee and all of us, I will come with yet more haste, and when the ice comes down take thee to it. And there I shall be king as here. For there every man is as a king. Have not the pleasant travellers told me so?”

“Oh, Christof, I cannot help my fear! Yet thou shalt go!”

“Look at these mighty hands,” he cried passionately, “look at me! Will there be any

braver there? Will any outstrip me in the race for gold and all those things they seem to need out there? Am I not great as they who went away to-day? Yet they have conquered that vast world. But a little time—think! but a little waiting—and no more cold or hunger—fear or death. The little harvest and the fish now caught will give ye food for all the while I stay. And when I come again, yea we shall wait God's word—But when the ice comes down we shall leave it rotting in its bins and go away to happiness. Come! come to our marriage!”

And so they went away with arms entwined, and, singing, came to blind Agra, who married them.

III

TO THE LAND OF THE BRAVE

THEN came the day he was to go. They gathered up that money, yet lying on the shore, and put it in his srip, and all was ready — he in his wolf-skin — she in her stole; yet she trembled as with palsy in his arms.

“What? Hast thou changed?” he laughed.

“Ah, ah,” she sighed, “thou art my husband now! I am a wife!”

Tears would not flow she was so terrified. No sob rose in her throat. She only trembled in his arms.

“Ah, this is not the lady of my dreams,” he said. “Come! come! Out with thy shears. Give me a tress for talisman, as the ladies of our Vikings did, and send me forth. Let me not stay. Call me a coward that I go. Come! come!”

“I cannot bid thee go,” she breathed; “my heart will not. Yea, we are poor and hungry here, sometimes, but stay with us thy kindred,

who love thee and will stand with thee when dark days come. There thou wilt be alone! A stranger in a land of strangers. Life is a hard thing here — yea — but stay and share it with us — make it not harder. Thou art brave — the bravest on the earth to me. That is why God hath left thee to care for us — of all those who are dead. Seest thou not His hand in this?”

“Yea.”

“Then must thou obey.”

“I see it not as thou. I see and hear God’s will in this longing for another land — in the coming of the travellers to tell me of it.”

Her face grew solemn.

“I did not think of that. How shallow is my thought! And selfish. I fear all selfish. Because I wish for thee to stay, my heart sees in each wish to go a sin against the God. And yet — and yet — it does not seem His will. Oh, husband, if it is, canst thou not make it plain to me who have little thoughts — thou with thy eagle thought?”

“Nay — nay,” and he caressed her fondly. “I have made thee sad. What? A sad

bride? Even under the glacier? It shall not be!"

But yet, the while she nestled in his arms, she begged:

"Yet, love, speak to my soul and make all plain to me."

"We will obey the God, my splendid one. I go now but to find a nest for thee and these when God Himself doth make this land impossible."

"Beloved, if God doth make this land impossible, then is it His purpose that we shall cease with the land as we began. And that is just, as all God's dealings are. Oh, it is ominous that thou a man, and I a woman, whom God made, should think to thwart His purposes in us or in this land! Thou canst not change the purposes of God, beloved."

"Does not God mean that we shall use the powers He gives us?"

"Yea — where He points the way."

"And who points the way to me? Who puts these things into my brain?"

This reasoning was better to her. And it all was new — so great a thought as that.

"I have not reasoned deep as that," she said in awe. "Surely, thy thought is greater and more reverent — than mine — as, indeed, a husband's should be greater than a wife's," she said in pretty pride of him. "I try, just now, to think the travellers did put the purpose in thee. Yet, somewhere, no matter how it came to thee, it had beginning in the mind of God. I know not," she whispered. "If thou thinkest it the will of God — thou shalt go. To Him all oaths and promises against His will are vanity and sin."

"Beloved, if I stay, it will be alone to tread the mill and build me and thee a house yonder with the dead. God does not desire that. That is our destiny — our only destiny. To be hungry — poor — naked — to starve — to waste — to be drowned in still waters — to sleep in decay yonder. If I go, the very world is mine and all it has. That is God's will."

"I am thy joy, Christof," pleaded his young wife. "So thou hast often said. And I will give thee all my little life to make thee happy here. I think I can. Oh, we will be hungry — yea — and poor — but we will be

together. There is no other life for me. Is there for thee? Together, Christof!"

"I cannot go without thy well-wishing," he smiled and caressed her; "but my wife will give me that and send me forth. She will not make me wear a young life out here that might be great and honored there. She has it in her splendid head that it will be for long and far. It is a week to the great land. A week to find a nest. A week to come again. Canst thou not wait and ward three weeks for paradise? Could I fail, if that is in thy head, when it is for the helpless ones upon our hands and hearts and for — thee? Now, for thy talisman of success. I will preserve it from all harm and bring it back to thee. I swear it on this pretty hand. Thus did our ancestors go forth. Art thou less brave than they? Am I?"

There was a moment in which nothing was heard but the sullen beating of the waves. She was so sad that almost he was persuaded to renounce ambition for her love. But his eye caught the sun upon a distant sail.

"There!" cried he. "It shall be as swift as that!"

“Why, then, my husband, go. I think it *is* the good God prompts thee. Else thou couldst not go from us who need thee so. And, if 'tis He — why — He knows thy heart — and He will go with thee and keep thee, and bring thee back to us. Thou art our all. For that I pray. For that each night we all shall pray. So — Christof — go with God. And I, thy Christine — I will stay and keep thine oath for thee — here in our little land — I will not forsake one of the little ones — not one of the old or blind or maimed or simple ones. And I shall have joy in this — remember that! Great joy shall I have in keeping thy oath for thee — to the priest — thy ancestors — thy God — until thou comest back to keep it once again thyself. Farewell, O sweetest lover ever woman had, farewell until thou comest back to me again!”

She took the brazen shears which hung at her belt and, cutting an unruly lock, she put it in his hands while her white lips moved in benediction.

And so he went, looking last upon her at that turning of the road, and she, there, her last on him.

IV

THE HOME OF THE FREE

THERE is a city which vaunts itself because in its laws oppression and injustice are not; where the popular shibboleth is freedom; whence liberty throughout all the land hath of old been proclaimed; where the proudest boast writ upon its monuments is of the sublime quality of its justice.

A great bell booms the hour of ten, and at the last reverberation the judge of the Quarter Sessions of the Peace advances from his retiring room and takes his place upon the bench. The crier raps the chamber to silence and delivers the customary invitation of the Commonwealth to the Falstaffian company being marshalled into the receiving docks.

“Oyez! oyez! oyez! All manner of persons who stand bound to appear before this honorable court, holden here this day, come forward, and ye shall be heard. And

may God save the Commonwealth and this honorable court."

Instantly a felon starts forward to the bar. An officer restrains him. The benchers laugh. He has accepted the invitation of the Commonwealth too literally. He cannot come forward and be heard.

The grand jury must first second the invitation of the State.

This body now files into its place.

"Gentlemen of the grand jury, have you any bills of indictment to present to the court?" the crier asks, and is rewarded with a considerable parcel.

The clerk scrutinizes these, the court does likewise, and then they come into the hands of the prosecuting officer, who briskly takes one from the top and calls a name:

"Christof Nielsen!"

Meanwhile, in seeming confusion, the grand jury is discharged and the petit jury called, and sworn.

"You, and each of you, do swear that you will well and truly try, and a true deliverance make, between the Commonwealth and the

prisoner at the bar, whom you will have in charge, and a true verdict render, according to the evidence, so help you God."

Again the crier calls:

"Put Christof Nielsen in the dock!"

At the name a haggard face emerges from the herd in the dock. The head is hooped about with blood-stained bandages — the face is bruised and swollen — one arm hangs limp and helpless at his side — with the other he steadies himself at the spiked railing as he obeys the court officer's gesture to stand.

He no longer wears the wolfskin tunic — but a worn "sack-coat" too small for him. His neck and the circlet of wolf's teeth are concealed by the collar of a flannel shirt. Trousers are on his legs instead of the skins and cross-garterings, and on his feet, where once were the great shoes of furred wolfskin, are hard shoes "made in America," which torture his feet. His hair has lost its sun-lustre and is cut short. In his hand he carries a small cloth cap.

"Christof Nielsen," reads the clerk, "you are charged in this bill of indictment with

the larceny of one silver watch, of the value of four dollars, the property of John Hall. How say you, guilty or not guilty?"

The prisoner lifts his dull, sick eyes, for the first time, when the voice of the clerk ceases, and stares inquiringly at the officer at his side.

"Not guilty," answers the officer for him.

"Put him in the small dock," commands the prosecuting officer, and the prisoner is marched, staggering, from the one dock to the other, the gate clangs to behind him, and he is upon his trial by his "peers" — the twelve "good men and true" yonder.

There are no challenges. The prosecutor of the pleas challenges only for the Commonwealth, and the prisoner is not assisted by counsel. Instead, the Commonwealth's officer opens his case to the jury.

"Gentlemen of the jury, the charge is pocket picking. In the *mêlée* consequent upon the arrest the prisoner assaulted an officer. For that, also, he is indicted upon a separate bill. I shall try both together. It will be for you to say upon such evidence as I

shall produce whether or not he is guilty and, if so, of which or both offences. Officer Gorman, take the stand."

Gorman is emulous to oblige the attorney for the State.

"You made this arrest. Tell the jury all about it."

There is much jockeying before Gorman is brought to his pace. He would wander into the enchanting by-paths of his adventure, to show his heroism. But the prosecuting officer will not permit this, and so the gist of his testimony is in this answer :

"I arrested that man there and run him in."

"You searched him, of course, and what did you find?"

"These here."

He holds up a letter with a curl dangling from its broken end.

The benchers laugh.

"Nothing else? No watch?"

"No. I expect he throwed that into a sewer. They mostly do when we git after 'em."

"Did he escape from you?"

"He tried to. I had to both club and shoot to git him. He's strong."

"You were obliged to call for assistance?"

"Yes."

"Has he ever been arrested before?"

"Yes. Served a term of seven months five years ago."

"Do you identify the man?"

"Yes."

"Let an officer inform the prisoner of his rights," says the district attorney, in the meantime calling Officer Jaspar to the stand.

The "rights" of the prisoner are to cross-examine the witness. The officer who gives him this information must lift the prisoner's wounded head from his bosom to do it. And, when he releases it again, it returns there.

Officer Jaspar is the one who assisted Gorman to make the arrest, and, when he can be brought into his narrative, knows nothing which Gorman does not. He, however, had also used his club and his pistol to subdue the prisoner.

"It seems to me," cries the Common-

wealth's officer, "that it took an extraordinary quantity of shooting and clubbing to take one man."

"He's a big un!" grins the witness.

"You seem to have used your pistols first?"

"Yes," admits the officer.

"You are the prosecutor," says the district attorney to Mr. Hall, when he is brought to the stand. "We have not, thus far, proved that a watch was taken out of your possession by this man, and without that I shall not ask for a conviction. Are you sure that it was?"

"Perfectly certain, sir," answers Mr. Hall.

"Well, tell the facts as briefly as possible to the jury," says the law officer, whose hope of an early adjournment and some golf begins to grow doubtful.

"Well, sir, I first saw the man at Chestnut and Tenth streets. He was walking fast, talking to himself, and he staggered. He ran against me and said something I could not understand, then went on rapidly down Chestnut Street. A moment after, when I looked what time it was, my watch was gone."

“ And the chain — was there a chain ? ”

“ Yes, that was gone, too.”

“ Broken ? ”

“ No, the whole chain was taken.”

“ Are you sure of that ? It is not easy for a thief to do.”

“ I am quite sure of that.”

“ Then, that's my case,” yawns the happy officer of the forum. “ I shall play golf at Bala this afternoon till six,” he says to his assistant.

V

THE QUALITY OF JUSTICE

A YOUNG man sitting at the counsel table, and grown diffident the moment he finds himself on his feet, rises to address the court.

"If the court pleases," he begins, and the court awakes with a start from a revery of dinner.

"Eh? Who is he?" the court whispers to the district attorney.

The officer scowls back and answers that he does not know.

The young man has heard.

"I am John Forrest, if the court pleases, admitted yesterday."

"Precisely, sir," smiles the court, icily; "but you are interrupting the trial of a cause. Your motion will have to wait until it is concluded — unless it is imperative."

"It is imperative," says the young lawyer.

"Ah, then, proceed," says the judge, "and pray be brief."

"I ask leave to conduct the defence of the prisoner. I know him — I know his language — I believe him innocent."

The prosecuting officer leaps to his feet.

"What this extraordinary young gentleman *believes* is of no consequence to us, your honor. Let him appear for the prisoner—if the prisoner wishes to have it so. I should consider it extra hazardous. The constitution countenances this sort of aberration, however, so I suppose we must suffer it—though the case is at an end."

The district attorney calculates that he will be a half-hour late at the links. The court nods his assent, and takes up the fascinating menu which has been sent over to him from the Union League, to whet his appetite upon. He will dine there to-night with the witty Grover Club.

The young lawyer has addressed a few words to the prisoner and has taken his hand. Instantly the inert head rises. The fires of life and hope once more light the eyes for an instant. His tongue is loosed. He is the Viking again—the lion at bay. The young

lawyer assures him with the overconfidence of youth that all will be well. That they have proved nothing.

At once the eyes are dull again, the head droops as before.

“Ah, they! It is the doom of God. They are only instruments of God. I do not hate them. I hate them no more than I should hate the axe of the executioner. Last night — and, yea, for many nights I saw Estan, the priest. I heard him say again: ‘I do fear the things that will come upon thee and our land!’ Go! It is the doom of God!”

At this moment the district attorney, seeing his time for golf being dissipated, says to the court:

“If your honor pleases, unless the defence is ready to proceed at once, I shall ask your honor to give the case to the jury on its default.”

Forrest takes his place.

“I recall all the witnesses for the Commonwealth for cross-examination,” says the young lawyer to the court.

“Object!” shouts the district attorney, on

his feet at once. "The prisoner failed to take advantage of this right when it was offered to him and his counsel sat idly by. It is too late now. I won't try the case all over again."

"I think," says the smiling court, "that I shall permit this. It is not your right, sir," — to the counsel for the prisoner — "but the easiest way is the best, in law as well as — elsewhere."

He smiles down upon the district attorney, as if he were saying:

"You will get your game the sooner, I will get my dinner hot."

"Proceed!" is all the officer of the Commonwealth has to say.

It is the young counsel's first examination of a witness.

"Officer Gorman," he says, with a child's savagery, "yi — you were here — bif — before?"

"Sure!" answers the officer, with a grin, and now the gentlemen of the bar laugh with the benchers, and even the court lays down the gilt menu and smiles broadly.

But, these things are good. They crowd upon the young champion of the prisoner a tremendous sense of the responsibility he has assumed. He addresses the court foolishly but seriously :

“I shall beg in advance the indulgence of the court. I have never before tried a case. I shall make some blunders in trying this one. But, sir, I have undertaken, here, upon the instant, without preparation, the defence of that priceless thing—a man’s liberty—nay, his life! For he is sick and hopeless unto death. And, unless he is taken from this court to an hospital, upon our hands will be not only his liberty but his life. Sir, I have been taught, I am sure this court has been taught, before it ascended the three steps which lead to the bench, that liberty is a holy thing. That it is a nobler quest, in this forum, to stand its champion than in that other to contend for those priceful things which may be measured in money. Am I wrong, sir, to do this? Do the gentlemen of the bar laugh for that reason? If they laugh at me, in God’s name let them do so.

But, let no one laugh at such a solemn spectacle as this — Look! Look at the man! Look about! Was ever man save He that suffered on the cross so friendless and alone? such a stranger among strangers?"

"Proceed!" shouts the district attorney.

The court nods in assent.

"When your opportunity comes, Mr. — Mr. —"

"Forrest," prompts the lawyer.

"— to address the jury, they may be interested in — er — your views — upon — er — liberty. The court — has — er — heard them often. Proceed, sir, with your witness."

Under this brutality John Forrest has become the steady practitioner of a dozen years.

"You know nothing about this watch, or its taking?"

"No."

"Then why did you arrest him?"

"On complaint of Mr. Hall."

"You had no warrant?"

"No."

The lawyer turns to the court.

"Upon the testimony of the man who made

the arrest it was an illegal seizure. He must have had a warrant unless he saw the commission of the offence. I move his discharge from custody."

"Object," said the district attorney, and the court instantly rules the objection sustained.

"Proceed, sir."

"Then, I ask the court to rule upon the question of whether or not the prisoner was justified in resisting an illegal arrest."

The district attorney objects again, and the court again frankly sustains him. The easiest way is certainly being proved the best — for him.

Nothing is developed from the other witnesses, who repeat their testimony. The prosecutor remembers distinctly having his watch, though he knew nothing of its taking.

Then the young champion puts the prisoner upon the stand. Now, if God's pity ever descends to temper the rigor of human judgment, here is its invocation —

His story is little and simple as his counsel translates it.

He had arrived in the city three days before. He gave a runner his last money to procure him work, but he did not return. And he waited and hungered and walked the streets, neither sleeping nor eating. He staggered against the prosecutor — yes — blindly — in an agony — he apologized — but the man called out — officers came — they shot at him — he fell — and then he opened his eyes as they saw him — bloody — maimed in a prison —

Then there is something which the young attorney hesitates to translate until he is charged with concealing testimony which will injure his case :

“ ‘It is the doom of God,’ ” he repeats then. “ ‘God meant me to stay and die in the ice. But I defied His purposes and came here. God is taking His vengeance. It is useless. These things are come upon me and my country because of sin. I must suffer them. They must. It is the doom of God!’ ”

“Oh! Is he THAT sort?” laughs the district attorney, and the benchers laugh with him.

The court declines to be amused. It takes time to be amused. And he has none to spare — before dinner.

The prosecuting officer, with a significant smile, declines to cross-examine, and so far as the Commonwealth is concerned, submits the case without argument to the jury. His assistant questions the propriety of this.

“Always wins,” he laughs. “The jury think either that it is not worth while, or that I think it safe, and agree accordingly. Juries haven’t much mind, you know. Besides, think of those idle golf sticks!” They laugh together. “And, further, it will flabbergast the doughty champion of the foreign gentleman. He won’t know how to begin — since he will have nothing of mine to answer or suggest.”

VI

THE FOOLISHNESS OF PREACHING

THIS seems true. Forrest knows the trick, and now he rises with manifest fear and trembling.

“Although the Commonwealth does not care to address you,” he says, “I conceive it my duty to do so — ”

“I told you he would be caught,” whispers the district attorney to his assistant, in glee. “There is only one counter to that trick, and that is to submit your own case. Then the jury is compelled to think that the defence has as much or more confidence in its case than the Commonwealth. For it has more to gain from a speech.”

“— It is not proven that a watch has been stolen, nor that an officer was assaulted, yet that is exactly and only what the prisoner is charged with. All that is proven is that a man had a watch before he collided with the

prisoner, and that he did not have it afterward. The law in its mercy has provided that every man shall be presumed innocent until he is proven guilty — *proven*, remember ! — not guessed guilty—”

His address is now, unfortunately, to the court, who is getting more and more hungry.

“Why, sir, if anybody be guilty here, I am the one. But a short while ago I was his guest in that little kingdom hedged by the mountain and the glacier. I sang to him the stirring songs of our country. Those songs of which the theme is liberty alone ! I thrilled his very soul with the tales of its freedom and justice and equality. I watched his nostrils expand at the words of our great battle-hymn. I beguiled him here with these things — though I did not mean to. And he came — to you, Columbia, land of the brave, who hold out your arms to all the nations of the earth and cry Come ! You — you — who invited him ! And you meet him with pistol and club and shackles ; the home of the free is a prison ! He begs for a crust, and you give him a bullet. And what has he done ? He has

but entered the door you hold open to him. And what will you do? Sick, wounded, and miserable — in peril of his life — at your own hands — what is your verdict? He is in your keeping. And as you hope for mercy at the great day, as you respect the sanctity of your oath, deal in justice and mercy with this stranger who has come within your opened gates — ”

“One of the difficulties of the young lawyer is to know when he is done,” says the district attorney, slyly, leaning his elbow on the bench and speaking to the judge.

The judge nods in a certain gastric irritation which is not well for either the prisoner or his counsel, but answers nothing.

“And to cease from college orations in a court of law. Somewhere these things should be taught as part of the law course. I am not aware that they are.”

The champion perspires and plunges on — when he had better stop — as any one but he — even the meanest of the benchers — can see.

“And there are others in your — keeping,

beyond that moaning sea — beside that desolate mountain — by that frozen glacier — on that little spot of earth where the ice always threatens. There they sit desolated — by the graves of their kindred — waiting for him. For he came to make a home for them. Will you send him back to them? Will you send them even the wreck you have made of him? So that he may die there and lie with his fathers? So that he may once more embrace his young wife? Touch the hand of blind Agra? Make smile again simple Lars?"

The advocate pauses a moment and his face grows stern with the duty he has set himself.

"He thinks the doom of God is upon him. But it is the doom of the American system. The doom of the American administration of justice. The doom of the American jury — which gives never the verdict of twelve, but of four or three or two — most often of one. In this day of reason verdicts should be the result of reason. But they are, as they were in the Middle Ages, the result of force. Twelve men are imprisoned together until seven men yield to five. Not because

the five have better reasons, but because they are stronger—either in mind or body. Because they can better endure privation and hunger and segregation. Five are set to prey upon seven in a place they cannot escape from until the morality of the seven is sufficiently broken and corrupted to vote, not for the righteousness of justice, but for release from incarceration. And this the judges permit because they must hurry. Because the hours are fixed from ten to three—and because in that time twenty-five causes must be heard. Because officers of courts are politicians and must work—after hours—for the party. Because, in short, everything is well considered in a court but the securing of exact justice. And in small cases such as this—where it is a foreigner who does not understand us or our language or procedure—what does it matter? He is a foreigner anyhow. This is the doom he faces and which every one must face—until our courts concern themselves with but the one thing for which they are—the administration of justice—the discovery of truth!”

The district attorney sighs and knows that neither the young advocate nor his cause nor his client has a friend within hearing now. As for him, he is indifferent, and would gladly see the man acquitted could he but get away to his game. What profit or honor is there in so small a case as this?

“Are you that kind of a jury? Is this that kind of a court? Is this the kind of victim who has come here for sacrifice time out of mind? Can this man’s life and liberty be trusted to you? Is there a man among you — five — six — twelve — who can stop and think only of this poor captive? Can you so far escape from the American system as to consider pure justice and nothing else? Dare you imagine yourselves in his place and then consider what you would do — what you would wish done by the twelve who sit where you do? Have you the courage to treat this as you would treat a ‘great’ case? — with many ‘great’ attorneys? Dare you defy the court — the district attorney — the laughter of these idlers — and send this man back to his home? I am asking much — I

know that. It is revolution to disagree from the court—to offend the district attorney. But I do so now and shall always.”

And now fear and embarrassment have fled from the young advocate and he is informed only with his great theme. His voice suddenly rings and thunders about the walls, so that the judge sits uncomfortably up and the benchers lean forward, and even the gentlemen of the bar are silent.

“And if you will not send him back to them, what message will you send? You cannot escape. You must do one or the other. And one will be infamy, the other will be as the grace of the Lord. Listen, each man of you twelve! It is a commandment you hear. Something more than myself is speaking through me. And look! Look at him, each one of you! For you are writing your own glorification or your own damnation in the sentence of this humble captive. I say to you, in the presence of God, that you cannot escape your duty. If you will not send this remnant of a man you have wounded home to his country, what message will you

send — to them that wait and wait and wait? You! You twelve! Hope, joy, bread, feasting, life? Or the sullen clang of the prison door — the horrid, shuddering clang — which is a knell of death? For your verdict, whether you will it so or not, means life or death not only to him who is chained there before you — but to them!”

A juror shakes his head in protest — a thing which the fatuous pleader should regard. But he speaks an answer instead:

“I tell you I know. For I have seen. There are aged heads bent low by misfortune — there are little children, there is a wife — young and fair and red-lipped. Do you condemn them to hunger — to cold — to slow death — these, huddled together, waiting — waiting — in the long gray polar night — for your word of fate, or do you send to them life and hope and joy? I ask you, before God, what message do you send? They are in your keeping as irrevocably as he is!”

VII

TO A HIGHER TRIBUNAL

COUNSEL for the prisoner sits down overcome by his own evocation of emotion. The more somnolent jurors scowl at him. He has made them uncomfortable. The court, now having control of the matter, hastens the adjournment.

“Gentlemen, you will find the prisoner not guilty of assaulting an officer. It is not fully proven. As to the charge of larceny, if you find that he took the watch out of the possession of the prosecutor, as he seems to think, he is guilty, and I instruct you to find him so. Otherwise, acquit him. If you are in doubt, acquit him. You have been told that there is no evidence of the larceny. That is for you, not counsel, to say.”

The jury, thinking from this that it is not much of a case, consult a moment, and are ready with their verdict — while the court

taps the bench impatiently with the gilt menu. The crier asks for the verdict:

"Gentlemen of the jury, how say you? Is the prisoner at the bar guilty or not guilty?"

"Guilty, with a recommendation to the mercy of the court," answers the foreman, yawning.

John Forrest rises to his feet, not knowing, in his confusion, what he ought to do.

"If the court pleases," he begins, "I had expected another verdict. But since —"

"Your duty is done, sir," smiles the chilly court, "and well done. I congratulate you, sir." Then he turns to the jury. "Gentlemen, I cannot pass your recommendation to mercy lightly. I shall not forget it. It is better that ten guilty men escape than that one suffer innocently. I am now in a trifle of a hurry. I shall suspend sentence until I can think your recommendation well over. Crier, adjourn the court."

The district attorney had his golf.

The judge had his witty dinner.

The recommendation to mercy was forgotten.

The sentence of the court was never passed.
A higher tribunal claimed jurisdiction.

Christof Nielsen died in his cell.

John Hall sent this note to the judge on the same day :

“My watch was in the pocket of my Sunday vest. I forgot to change it on Monday. Have that young man set free. I am sorry.”

“Let him be discharged as soon as possible,” said the righteous judge to the district attorney, flinging the note on his desk.

But death is swifter than justice when her wheels turn backward.

VIII

THE SHADOWS OF DEATH

OVER the sea, many months after, a runner brings a letter to those who sit beside a failing rushlight. The faces are too white — the eyes too brilliant for well-nourished bodies. Signs of wolfish poverty abound. They are but three. The rest are dead of hunger. One is old and blind. Upon his pathetic face the shadow of death has passed. Another has the smile of the simple — tortured into pain by the tight-drawn lines of want. Another is young and fair — yes — still young and fair — but not red-lipped now. For these many months which might all be years they have borne together the weariness of this watching and cold and hunger. The ice hangs just above their small thatch now, and the sea is at the door. Yet more than the hunger of their bodies — more than the cold and terror — have been the hunger and

the cold and the terror of their souls. They have prayed God with agony to let their cup pass. Is there to be no word? No sign? If God wills—yes. They have both trusted and doubted God.

Yet now they repent. Here, in this letter, is the answer to their prayers. After all God is righteous—altogether righteous! Is it to bid them come? Is it to tell them when he will come? If the first, they will go in haste—for the ice is close, as he foretold. God has spoken. If the last, he must take them quickly, or the ice will come.

They gather a little closer about the dying light. The blind one clasps his hands hard on his staff to stop their shaking. The simple face is all one ghastly smile. The wan one—wiping her dry eyes where there should be tears—kneels before them, and with a quivering supplication breaks the seal. Her face is as ashes. She has not a word in her dry throat. The writing is not his. At her silence a shiver creeps over the blind one. The simple one smiles anew.

“Ha, ha!” he says, “I am hungry!”

The enclosure falls into the lap of the wan one. A short note in a stranger hand — that unruly curl she cut for him the day he went — an old letter of her own, beginning with a love word. The note tells a brief story ending in death.

There is nothing more. These are the tidings. This is the answer to their prayers.

Yet still they sit there — like ghosts — until their stony eyes are fixed — until the smile on the simple face passes into eternal calm — until the rushlight dies, and pitying darkness falls.

When the fickle northern summer comes again it lingers wonderingly about the idle cottage doors, fixed close in the ice, pausing at one with the reverence which befits the unclosing of a tomb. It stays for but a little day, then flies before the conquering ice and comes no more.

Yet, that tomb, far out toward the eternal ice cap, where the cottage is in the embrace of the ice, was "made in America," the land of the brave and the home of the free — while the gentlemen of the bar and the benchers

laughed, and in that city whose proudest boast is of the sublime quality of its justice — because a judge was impatient for his dinner — because a prosecuting officer would play golf. Was it wrong? And who will right the wrong? And where will it be righted? Is there a forum for such causes as these? And who will be punished for it? The judge — the jury — the district attorney — all of them?

GUILE

GUILE

I

CHILLY WISDOM

"GUILE," said John Estover, savagely, to his wife, "is as communicable as — as — tuberculosis!"

"Yes, John," sighed his wife.

"And when there is a predisposition to it — segregation is absolutely imperative."

"Yes — yes! But I confessed *my* frivolities before the Great Meeting, and they prayed for me in our silent fashion — and said: Go in peace! Does thee remember?"

Estover's face relaxed a trifle.

"I meant our child."

"We were bride and groom then, John," his little wife whispered, on seeing his softening.

She did not see, though, that he had at once forbidden the softness to his face, and went on.

"You didn't care then that I was French and had a most unquakerish name —"

"Say 'thee,' please, Ann (her name was Jeanne), and when thee thinks 'Quaker' say Friend."

"Yes, John."

It is true that the smiles the thought of her bridehood brought had gone from her face with the sigh which followed. But another smile was there — for him. For she knew perfectly what was beneath this ecclesiastical chill. The very man who had been her bridegroom, and had never been anything else.

"Some people blame it on heredity — their poor parents; some upon temperament. But it is neither thee nor me now. I think it is nothing but temptation — the getting into contact with evil — just as that is necessary to contract tuberculosis."

"But, John," smiled the wife, "*I* was a wicked little girl when thee found me in Paris —"

"And saved thee!" thundered John.

"Yes, John. Wasn't it queer that I should like thee with no collar on thy coat? At

first I think it was because thee was so different — so very strong thee seemed.”

“It proves,” said John, with chilly wisdom, “that if evil is communicable, goodness, also, is, and that it is stronger than evil.”

“But what, then, brought thee to the theatre, where I danced? I had never before seen a Quaker there — I had never before seen one anywhere.”

She laughed happily.

“I had heard of thee — thy grace and beauty — and I desired to know if God permitted such gifts to be so sadly used.”

“And then?”

“After I saw thee I wished to save thee.”

“Thank thee, my dear, dear John.”

“I think, Ann,” said John Estover, reflectively, “that I am not telling the exact truth. There is such a thing, thee knows, as telling the truth without exactness.”

“Oh, yes,” admitted his wife with an alacrity which would have alarmed any one less good than her husband.

“I have often supposed that the exact truth is, that, travelling to cure an illness becomes,

when the illness is cured, a travelling for pleasure. This, I fear, was my sinful state when I reached wicked but beautiful Paris. I was, therefore, the prey of all temptation. And no temptation, we are told, is so potent as woman. Observe the inatter of Adam and Eve, then Rahab and Jezebel — and, indeed, countless instances, where good men have fallen by the way at the beckoning of a woman. I think, Ann dear, that perhaps the world, the flesh, and the devil had an undue grip upon my soul there in Paris, and that I was saved by suddenly seeing what it had made of thee. It was an example I shall never forget. Nor shall I ever cease to return thanks for its outcome.”

“Nor I, John dear,” laughed his little wife, with an incontinent embrace.

“There, there,” said John, putting her off tenderly. “Yet — it all remains to us in this one greatest difficulty of our lives — this keeping from our child the history of thy life. But I am convinced that it is best. A daughter must respect and look up to her mother. She must seem to her to have always been im-

maculate. And this could not be if she knew all about thee. She would not understand how well thee has redeemed thyself. She would despise thee, and thy precepts would be of little avail. Yet must thou continue thy exhortations to good."

Ann smiled. The unwisdom of husbands kept him from the knowledge that these exhortations were made in each other's arms. This the mother not only thought likely to be most effective, but much more lovely than any other way.

She threatened a caress.

"Yes — yes," said John, suppressing a suspicious movement of the arms toward her. "But it is of Mary Ann. She is of an age. And she is as pretty as thee — in that day thee speaks of. Therefore watch that she enter not into any temptation."

"Such as thee was to me?" laughed his wife. "Oh, John!"

And this time John did not resist her.

"I meant our child," said he softly, "not thee."

Now all of this might have been said concerning one Doctor John Rem, of whom they

had never heard. And John Estover might have added that, when two people predisposed to what he had called guile met, one as tempter, one willing to be tempted, the danger was excessive.

Nay, had he known this Doctor Rem, he would have taken every precaution that he and his daughter Mary Ann should not meet. For Rem had left behind at college an example for the emulation of sophomore hoodlums.

And now, just returned from college, filled with really valuable learning concerning disease, but having no practice at all and much idleness, it was exceedingly dull and he exceedingly ready for amorous experiment. And you may be sure that if it should happen to come in the shape of a pretty Quaker, it would be only a little more piquant.

All these sayings are necessary — though, I admit, somewhat dull — that you may understand the doings between this very doctor and this very Quaker maid. For you cannot suppose that I have them both in the same story for any other purpose than such troublous joys as make up that curious thing called love.

II

PATCHOULY

Now it happened that while their discussion was at this point, the subject of it arrived. She did not at all come as a Quaker maiden ought, but like a breeze when the door is let suddenly open. And, indeed, in the coming, she had left the door open.

Her father solemnly closed it.

Meanwhile she had pounced upon her mother and kissed her, and now she attacked her father in the same way.

"Thank thee, daddy," she laughed, and when he put her off, none too strongly, she ran up the stairs, still laughing, whence she called downward for her mother.

John stopped Ann as she would have gone, and, sniffing stealthily, pointed with his glasses up the stairs, saying ominously :

"Perfume!"

She sniffed and smiled.

"Patchouly!" she murmured. "John, it is my fault. I told her some things about myself the other day. They made us both very happy. I *must* tell some one. I think I mentioned patchouly. I thought it was extinct. What a time she must have had getting it!"

John frowned.

"Yea, yea — she takes after thee."

"And is that so bad — as long as it is only kisses and perfume?"

He had sat quite hopelessly in his chair, with his head turned. Before he could resist, her arms were about him and she had kissed him and was gone to the steps. There she paused — on the third step — looking as she had looked long ago — she never seemed to get older — as John thought she ought — and called :

"John!"

Her husband looked. And, looking, he had to smile. No one could have helped doing that.

"John, I love thee, anyhow!"

And she rebelliously and defiantly sniffed

the perfume and ran up the stair — precisely as Mary Ann had done.

“Takes after her mother,” he sighed — and smiled.

For another thought had come with the smile.

“Or does her mother take after her?”

At this moment a double laugh came down the stair. And he, down there, answered it. So that you will understand that John Estover, Friend and Overseer, and John Estover, Husband, were very different individuals.

Upstairs it was hard to distinguish one from the other of these two pretty women — which was daughter, which mother — for they were locked in a laughing, weeping embrace, and the one was showing the other a long-necked, old-fashioned bottle, labelled

“PATCHOULY.”

Well, she was like her mother, and so, when I describe the one, you will see the other. The daintiest of *retroussé* noses, eyes entirely too large for her face, a mouth that *would* smile her very thoughts — and sometimes, tell them

— a curiously deep dimple in her chin. But for her attire no one would have thought her a subdued Quaker. Yet upon that even the little mother insisted.

“First,” she said, “your father wishes it. Second, you will never be so pretty in anything else. Dearie, you make me think of a blush rose hidden in the heart of a lily every time I look into your bonnet. Think what a surprise that will be to your prince that day he comes! To look into the prim, gray bonnet and find — you!”

And she kissed what she found there.

“And, oh, my beloved, there are ways and ways! Men must be managed and women must be pretty — and both are possible — even in Quaker garments.”

“My beloved!” cried the one.

“My sweet Marian!” responded the other.

Whereby you will know what even John Estover did not know concerning his wife and child — that they had changed the fearful name he had chosen, to the next best thing they could devise, and keep the faith. For, in her “management” of John Estover and his affairs,

the little French woman kept so close to the thing he insisted upon, that when her innovations were discovered, as they sometimes were, they were considered venial instead of criminal — and this is just the difference between wisdom and folly. For, upon one occasion, when he had said :

“What was that — Marian ?”

His little wife had answered :

“Mary ! — Ann !” making each a staccato note, and adding, “Will I never speak the English ?”

She spoke the language perfectly.

III

THE CALYXLIKE BONNET

Now it was into this lily calyx that the unregenerate Doctor John Rem looked one day, with precisely the emotions which the mother of Mary Ann had foretold — though, of course, he had not time to formulate them with such beauty. It was only a moment. And he was bewildered.

And the wonder of it was that he had found her with the wife of his friend Jarn, whom they both called Bell-Bell, for no better reason than that her name was Belle, and that she was the wisest and brightest and best of young wives and comrades — even though that does sound like a certain hymn.

“In heaven’s name, Bell-Bell, what does it mean?”

Mrs. Jarn became mysterious.

“Little boys must be seen, not heard.”

“I am not a little boy. Observe the bald spot on my head.”

“Any unmarried man is as a little boy concerning women, be he as old as you. Moral: Get married. And I wish you would hurry. I can’t employ you till you do. And until I employ you, you will have no patients.”

Doctor Rem laughed good-naturedly.

“Well, you know, I have such an awful reputation for being a brute — ”

“She has never heard of you. I have been too ashamed.”

“But she will. There’s that horrible story of my having crippled Leggett. Some of the newspapers said I killed him, and that story still survives. She couldn’t miss that!”

Rem sighed hopelessly.

“She doesn’t read the newspaper — it isn’t permitted in Quaker families, you know, until it has been expurgated. Then it has lost all interest for her, and her mind *will* fix itself only upon the holes where the awful things have been excised. Once or twice I have taken the precaution to let her see what they were in my copy. But not often — not before I myself have been over them. For, say

what you please, her Quaker innocence is the loveliest attribute she will ever have — the worldliness I shall teach her is not a half compensation — and she shall not be spoiled — she shall always be a Quaker. Yes, sir — but I shall teach her just enough worldliness to make some one — not you — want her enough to — Oh, I haven't mentioned you. I have been ashamed to do it. Therefore, she is assailable."

"Huh! She flew away the moment I came."

"Fear of your fascinations."

"Say, — Bell-Bell, *was* it on my account?"

"It was. But not because of your fascinations. You are a rather rude diamond. It was because we have a deep, dark, deadly secret from you."

She whispered it, in quite the conspirator fashion.

"Oh!" said Rem, stiffly. "Then I was de trop?"

"Decidedly."

"All right. When I hear both of you pounding the piano, I won't come in. She is learning to play."

"I know perfectly well that the more you hear that piano in the future, the more you will come in."

"It *is* dull practising medicine and trying to get a reputation for steadiness. No one thinks it possible for me," sighed Rem.

"Poor boy! Nothing is so dreadful as reformation. And I will continue to help you. So shall she!"

Rem brightened at once.

"Say, Bell-Bell, will she, though?"

"Aha! Piquant, isn't it? — an affair with a little dove of a Quaker! Remember that I can protect her. So you may come whenever you hear the piano — just to help you to reform, and we will stop and put on our other clothes and entertain you gravely. Then some day, when you have proved that you are quite respectable, and are received at the bedsides of elderly ladies, we will confess all — what sort of crime we are up to — what sort of clothes we wear at our rehearsals — where and when we met. No, all that must wait until I have her safely married and out of your reach. For, I tell you frankly,

she says that she has one reason for liking you — you are tall."

"Oh!" laughed Doctor Rem. "But, say, I have never made love to a Quaker in my life. However, thanks! I'm willing."

"You are to be nothing but friends, do you hear? I won't have her mouth turned down instead of up at the corners!"

Then, as a woman will, she forthwith tempted him to his destruction:

"She's lovely, John! The very loveliest human being I have ever known! Oh, she and I are old friends. And that is the only reason I permit you and she to become old friends. While you were busy at such nasty things as administering the two parts of a seidlitz powder so that ebullition would take place in the stomach of the poor person at your college dispensary, I was making love to the little Quaker — who would have preferred a man."

"Of course," said John Rem.

"Oh, not 'of course.' But if you were not what you are, I would let you try to interest her. Nothing would please me better."

“And, her — be hanged!” cried the young physician, with enthusiasm.

“If you were not what you are — a brute.”

“Yes — she’s a Quaker,” sighed John Rem, regretting for the first time his stormy life.

Bell-Bell, as a woman will, veered the moment he had come to her point of view.

“She is a woman, John, dear, and sometimes a woman likes that in a man — if it is honest — as yours is. Now run away. I have been indiscreet. And married six years, too. Go!”

IV

THE FIDDLING OF FORTUNE

FORTUNE fiddled favorably for the young physician. The next day it rained, and as he was leisurely getting down from the uptown train, a little exclamation arrested him, and, withal, two hands were planted in the middle of his back and clutched there wildly. Turning quickly John Rem looked again into the calyxlike bonnet.

It was plain that even in the distress of her accident she had recognized him, as well as that she meant to be haughty — in a Quakerish way. She did decline his assistance. But it was really at such moments as this that what was finest in Rem came out.

“You are injured,” he said, with gravity and strength, “and I must help you. I am a doctor.”

Without more ado he carried her to the women’s room in the station, and with the

help of the matron attended to her injury — which was slight.

However, she was glad to lean on his arm as he led her to the street car which she insisted upon taking to Bell-Bell's, and while this had happened to him often before, he did not remember that he had had such interest in the proceeding. While she, when he had left her alone in the car, shook her head at herself accusingly, as she said :

“Entirely too glad — entirely — to be carried ! ”

And she turned and watched him stalk away.

After a week of unrest, which he blamed upon the dulness of the practice of medicine, he remembered the roll of music which she had carried under her arm, and since it happened to be the same day of the week, to give nepenthe to his dulness he took the train down town which they had both taken that other day. She was there, and he fitted himself into the seat at her side with the utmost assurance of a welcome. She bubbled with laughter.

“Suppose I had told thee it was taken?”

“Impossible — for you,” he laughed.

“Why?”

“You are a Quaker, and Quakers always tell the truth.”

“I do not,” she said.

“It was really the only vacant seat in the car.”

“I am glad,” she laughed, and knew that there were many others, “that thee does not.”

“Oh! Glad?” But he was not sure.
“Then that is not the truth, I suppose?”

“If there had been another seat, thee would have taken it.”

“More prevarication!” he laughed.

“Wouldn’t thee?”

“No,” he said. “If you knew what a villain I am, you would shun me —”

“I have not been permitted to shun thee,” she interrupted.

He persisted.

“I deliberately selected this day and this train to go down town because I knew that you would be on it. Now, then, what is my punishment?”

“I thank thee.”

“What?”

Though it was all persiflage, he could not believe his ears.

She went on gravely, now, in quite a Quakerish fashion :

“I have desired to thank thee for thy assistance to me a week ago to-day. There is no telling where such injuries may end if they do not receive prompt attention at the beginning. On that day — I was so — so — full of pain — that I forgot to thank thee. Now, at last, I do. It was very thoughtless, and I have looked for thee every day with the purpose of thanking thee — I had even thought of writing thee a note.”

Rem laughed with real embarrassment — a new emotion to him.

“I don’t believe that I am awake,” he said.

She turned her head away, and the long bonnet hid her face from him.

“The pain was so great that I forgot —”

In reaching for something — perhaps a handkerchief — Rem did not know where such a thing might be concealed in such a toilette — her hand came in contact with his, and his

pounced upon it instinctively. For a moment it struggled and then was regretfully released.

"The pain was — so great —" she was repeating dreamily, and Rem could see a part of one cheek now. It bloomed with the very roses of June. "The—pain — was — so—great —"

"There was no pain," laughed brutal John Rem. "And it couldn't have hurt after the first minute."

She suddenly faced him, and he was altogether bewildered by the smiling happiness in her eyes.

"Then I thank thee for that. It is much better to be thankful that there was no hurt — than that there was — does thee not think so?"

He did.

And he followed that wandering, fluttering, little hand until it again came under the dominion of his, and was again — a trifle more slowly now — withdrawn.

"My hand is not hurt," she said.

"Heavens! I believe my heart is," he laughed.

"This is my station," she said, and ran out of the car.

V

A DANGEROUS TRAIN

THERE were other meetings on that ten-thirty train, until Doctor Rem showed a very moody face at the house of his friend Jarn, one day.

“Doesn’t she come to pound the piano any more?” asked he of Bell-Bell.

“Certainly.”

“What!”

“Certainly.”

“Then she must take another train!”

“Yes, the ten-twenty.”

“Just to avoid me!”

“I am perfectly amazed at the moral turpitude which you and she have at this moment disclosed. Sir, you have been meeting on the trains!”

“One train, please,” grinned Rem, “the ten-thirty.”

“And you have both kept this a secret from me!”

“Certainly,” said Rem, in his turn. “You were against me from the first. Do you suppose that I am going to put my plans into the hands of my enemies?”

“Plans!” shrieked Bell-Bell. “Plans! About her! A Quaker! Doctor Rem, I demand to know what your plans are!”

“Well, I don’t exactly know myself. I didn’t quite mean to say ‘plans. It slipped out. But I suppose if I were let alone I would do something—very—very foolish,” sighed the physician.

At this point Bell-Bell broke into a long laugh.

“Oh, what babes! You are both under the impression that you have fooled me. Why, you old brute, any one could tell that you were seeing her if by no other way than your gentleness. She has been good for you. She will continue to be good for you. I have long ago seen that that is the solution. You must marry a Quaker. She will both steady you and make you respectable. And if you are hunting a Quaker—well, I shouldn’t wonder if you have found one. For the only

reason she gave for changing from the ten-thirty to the ten-twenty was that it was a dangerous train!"

They laughed together.

"And it is, poor girl! Though, I confess, until you told me just now, I thought the danger was in the railroad."

"Do you really think I was the danger?" asked Rem, happily.

"John, dear," said Bell-Bell, "you are a very foolish wooer."

"Who said I was a wooer?" demanded the young physician.

"No one but me, unfortunately," said Mrs. Jarn.

"Not me, be hanged!"

"No, not you. Therefore, go away and stop bothering me. I have better things to do — and better persons than you to see. After all, she has not saved the brute — only helped the wolf to put on lamb's clothing. Run along!"

"If you make me angry," threatened John Rem, "I swear I will come down town on the ten-twenty to-morrow."

“I will telephone the fact to her.”

“Then I’ll take every train there is.”

“How busy you will be on that day at least! Run away, boy.”

“And if you make me very mad, I’ll marry her — just to spite you!”

“Poor girl! Please get very mad. No, no, no! I mean don’t. Go away! You are a dog in the manger. Go.”

VI

SIMILIA SIMILIBUS CURANTUR

Now Doctor Rem thought on these things and in his heart decided that they were true. But though convicted, he was nothing more. Until that night he got Bell-Bell's wire to go down on the seven-thirty train.

He was going to the Charity Masque in the costume of a Roundhead cavalier, and was as moody as his coat. Yet when he met her, all his moodiness fled. He held her hand in the real forgetfulness of inchoate possession. She drew it away angrily.

"Why — may I sit with you?" he begged in beautiful humility.

"Thee is alone?"

It escaped out of her heart of hearts.

Rem had the misfortune to laugh.

"Oh, that was the cause of your anger!"

"That thee was alone — yes," she countered with tremendous aplomb. "I am very sorry — for my anger."

She made the room for him at her side he had begged for.

"Your anger was justified," said Rem, happily. "No one has any business to be alone in a thing like this — and — therefore — I am going to tempt — you —"

"I feel like a little brown sparrow among you all," she said with discontent, for the car was crowded with the guests of the Masque.

"Do you suspect how many of these ladies would like to be this little brown sparrow?"

"Not one!" she cried fiercely.

"Rebellion!" laughed he.

"No! Guile! Wickedness! Shame!" she cried, hiding her face with her hands, and so making herself irresistible to the cavalier. "But I cannot help it! One of my ancestors — a very near one — belonged to the *corps* — and — do you know what I am wishing with all my heart?"

"Yes," he laughed.

"Thee does not. Of course not. But I will tell thee. I am wishing to go to this Masque! There!"

"I know. It is foreordained."

"You do not. And it is as bad to wish to be wicked as to be wicked."

"Therefore it can be no worse for you to go."

"I dance!"

"Whew!"

"Yes! Like a little demon! Don't stare so. The people in the rear are looking. They don't take me for a Quaker at all. They think I am costumed for the ball. I heard them saying so before you came."

"Listen!"

Even then a young prince on the other side was saying to one Starlight:

"It was an exquisite idea. And the whole costume is fine!"

"It is fate!" tempted Rem.

"Bell-Bell taught me. That is our secret. Thee must keep it with us. No, after all, Bell-Bell only helped a little. My feet were born to it. For, even when I was a child, to hear a waltz and sit perfectly still was impossible. Often my portion was dry bread for it. Yet I did not care. Does thee think one can inherit such wickedness?"

"Yes, thank God, it is a law of nature."

“Oh, if I could once dance, dance, dance, till I was dizzy — delirious — and wicked as sin itself — la la la — ”

She hummed the music of a waltz —

“— till I dropped in my tracks — ” she stopped to laugh a trifle piteously at the pretty bit of slang on her tongue — “I think I should be cured. *Similia similibus curantur*, thee knows.”

She turned upon him where he gazed bewitched and cried with flushed cheeks and flashing, laughing, hungry eyes:

“Thee is a physician. Is not that proper treatment?”

“It is,” he said. “I advise it.”

“Ah, it is easy to — advise! La la la! The music is there! The dancing! I am to keep the children for Bell-Bell.”

“No,” said John Rem. “I said I would tempt you — remember.”

“Yes,” sighed Miss Estover. “The carriage is to meet me at the station. If I would, I could not. Ah, yes, it is fate.”

“As truly as anything that ever happened. You are in costume. I am. I am alone. You

are. Bell-Bell does not need you. There is a nurse. Last and not least, there is a carriage made ready for us. But one thing remains, a mask for you — and that will take exactly the three minutes it requires to drive to Mousson's."

She looked up at him with large, tempted eyes.

"I am your physician. That is my prescription. Come!"

"Oh, oh, oh! Get thee behind me, Satan!" she whispered.

"Your disguise will be absolutely impenetrable! This bonnet — a mask —"

"Ah, doctor, dear," she whispered wistfully back to him, "will it certainly cure? Will it not — might it not — aggravate the complaint? Oh, thee does not know how a great orchestra gets into my little sinful soul!"

"I am happy to be able to guarantee my treatment," he said.

"I wish — almost — that I had not met thee — my tall and splendid Satan. And will thee take me to the pinnacle of the temple — oh, the very pinnacle!"

“Yes,” he laughed.

“And show me all the world of joy — then drop me down — down — down — into disgrace and shame?”

“No! by the earth and heaven, I will be your faithful pal in whatever may happen to us.”

“Hush! hush! Swear not at all. And if I should yield to thy tempting — will thee keep my secret always — always — forever and ever?”

One should have seen her eyes then.

“I should deserve shooting the moment —”

And he got both the hands and would not let them go.

A moment she thought with drooping head while her hands remained in his. Then she said:

“I have yielded. Oh, I do not know whether it is more to thy tempting than to the tempting of the dance. I yield. Take me. For this evening I am thine. And whatever follies I may commit — oh, I shall not be responsible when the orchestra opens! I shall be mad — abandoned — I feel it —

know it — and thee — ” she whispered with her head down — “ thee — *must* thee have thy arm about me — to dance ? ”

“ Undoubtedly ! ” cried John Rem, with savage decision.

“ Oh — well — ”

She sighed and woke and spoke more lightly :

“ Whatever follies I may commit, thee will not desert me — but will be my true knight — and, at the end, I shall require myself of thee less my infirmity — all this does thee swear ? ”

He kissed the hilt of his sword.

“ And afterward,” she went on, “ we are never to see or speak to each other — oh, I could not — could not look thee in the face again after such wickedness ! ”

“ Part ? Never ! ” he cried.

“ Then I shall not. Thee makes me fear thee.”

“ Well — as you wish,” he said.

And at the disappointment in his face a pretty light came to her own. She gave him her hand without his asking — for the first

time — and whispered — for the first time, also :

“Forgive me — John.”

Then, shocked at herself, she explained :

“The Quakers use the first name, always, thee knows.”

“I know,” said John Rem, kissing the little thing he held.

VII

THE INEFFABLE WHIRL

AND so, in time, they came into temptation worse than his — the surge of the orchestra. He felt her arm tremble in his and drew it very close.

“Yes!” she gasped.

“Are you frightened?”

“I am gone mad!”

It was not yet their time, and he drew her to a nook behind the curtain of jasmines where they were alone.

“Why did thee bring me here?” she asked.

“I want to call you Mary Ann,” he said.

“Mad, too!” she laughed.

“For the first time in my life, I believe,” he said, “I am embarrassed. I feel like he must feel who has gayly stolen something and found it immeasurably precious. But, yet — ”

“Hush! Thee is mad, too. Be content. Soon we shall wake and find it all a dream.

But, me ? Oh, John, John, John, let me dream this one dream and ever after sleep ! ”

The orchestra, as if answering her wish, opened a waltz. She cried out and put her hands close on her ears. But even then she swayed to the rhythm, she closed her eyes, and slowly moved to the beating of the arch tempting of the violins, as if it were all part of some spell. John Rem put his arm about her waist. She raised her head a moment and looked with a gasp of ecstasy fair into his eyes, then gave him her hands.

And, so, they danced — all the night. There were — yes — other times when they sat there behind the jasmines — but, for her, the vibration — the mad ecstasy never ceased.

Then, at last, it was all over. The orchestra had ceased. And they were once more behind the jasmine pillars, quite bereft of sense of other being than that which had been among the violins.

The touch of the feather of his chapeau on her cheek was enough. She lifted up her face to him. And when he had raised the mask, there was a look such as he had never seen

even in his dreams of the fairest woman in the world. Damp tendrils of her hair flowed over her cheeks. Within its calyx of a lily was indeed the rose. And there it blushed and pulsed with the newest and the oldest emotions that have ever stirred a woman's soul. Her lips begged kisses, hungry, insensible, mad, and were not denied.

But then she shuddered at her deed.

"Take me home!" she cried. "I am an outcast!"

"Yes," whispered Bell-Bell's voice behind him, "take her home — you brute!"

In the carriage she shuddered away from him.

"No!" she cried. "I am a monster! And you have let me be one!"

But when he had brought her in and was dejectedly taking his leave, the sudden passion came again as it had come that moment when he kissed her.

"Bell-Bell," she whispered with large eyes and feverish lips, "ought I to see him — to the door? Just one instant, perhaps? I did not thank him, I was unkind to him. In the

carriage I thought I hated him. He ought to have known better. He is of the world and knows. I did not. At the ball he said — he called me his — he — ”

She whispered something in her very ear as if to keep the horrid knowledge from her own soul.

Bell-Bell nodded gravely.

“And I let him ! ”

The happy young wife pushed her toward the door.

“Yes — yes, dear, I know. We cannot help some things.”

“But — I wished him.”

“Is it possible ? ”

“Bell-Bell, I tempted him ! I made my lips so — so ! I think I pulled him down ! ”

“Good heavens ! What wickedness ! ”

“Yes ! Now — does thee think I had better let him say good-by — forever and ever ? ”

“Yes,” said Bell-Bell, with judicial airs, “if you are sure it *is* forever and ever. Fear not. I will wait right here — inside the door. And if I hear a sound, I’ll be on him like a lion. But only a minute for the brute.

Mind!" She turned and bit her lips to keep them in order.

"Yes—oh, yes! I will be sure to be only a minute. And thee shall stand—I have quite forgotten thee all the evening—such is the result of wickedness—thee shall stand right here—inside and—just here—and listen to every word I say—and thee shall call me when the minute is up—unless—I come—before—"

"Yes, yes. Hurry!"

She went out swiftly, calling:

"John—is thee gone? Wait—wait—one minute!"

Bell-Bell went to bed.

VIII

THE LENGTH OF A MINUTE

WELL, there, in the vestibule, the tendrils were still on her face, and her eyes were greater and her voice softer than before; and, somehow, without her will her hands went out to him, and without his will his arm disposed itself as it had done for dancing.

“Hush!” she whispered, putting her hand on his mouth to shut out the very words she hungered for, “we have only a minute, and I wished to thank thee and to be forgiven by thee — and — and — to forgive thee — and to never, never meet again — as we agreed — so — so — oh, it was wrong — wrong! But I am so wicked that I am not sorry. No, nor ever shall be! But thee will never tell — and — and when thee is married — everybody has little secrets from his wife — or — husband — my mother has — why, do not tell thy — *wife* —”

But that word was too much for either of them to endure.

He kissed her so savagely that she lay quiet in his arms.

"Bell-Bell," murmured the happy and dishevelled Quaker lady to the sleepy lady of the house of Jarn, "I'm sorry. Forgive me. It was more than a minute — wasn't it?"

"I think it was an hour," snapped Bell-Bell, with pretended savagery.

"Bib — but thee did not call," half sobbed the happy one, "and — and I — forgot!"

"God bless you both!" shouted the little wife, and in a moment had the dishevelled head with the damp tendrils of hair on her breast. "I am almost as happy as you."

"Why?" questioned the Quaker lady.

"Why — didn't he ask you to marry him?"

"No. I don't think he would wish to marry a Quaker — especially one as wicked as I am."

She could hear the fine teeth of Bell-Bell grind.

"Isn't it funny that one can be so very

wicked and so very happy at the same time?"

"No. Go to sleep. I must think."

"Mi — must I tell thee all that happened in the vestibule?"

"No. I know."

"Oh! Thi — thee saw us?"

"I went straight to bed."

"Then, how, Bell-Bell, dear —"

"Look here, I've been through all that. There are others besides John Rem. I don't like him a bit to-night. And I shall tell him so very early in the morning."

"Not so tall and strong as he, I think, dear Bell-Bell."

"All right. Go to bed, you wicked little Quaker."

"I can't. I've got to talk. Bell-Bell, there couldn't have been any one to hold *thee* that way — as if thee were never to get away again! And — and kiss thee. That is twice!" she wailed, with the air of a felon confessing his felonies. "Does thee think me irreparably wicked? He does, I know, and will never look at me again."

“Never fear. They like us to be wicked — a little — you know. Now, off to bed with you!”

“Truly?”

“Truly. To bed!”

IX

AT TEN IN THE MORNING

UNTIL ten o'clock the next morning, at which hour he rose and confided it to his shaving-mirror, John Rem had enjoyed the happiest day of his life. But at precisely that hour he heard his name called out by a newsboy on the street. In a moment more not only his name, but his picture, was before him in the newspaper he had bought. And beside his own was the name and a fair sketch of Miss Estover, Quaker.

In fact, it was all known, and, with marvellous guesses, where fact had failed, it had been printed. It was a piquant story, and so it had the place of honor on the first page and the blackest "heads." The incident behind the jasmynes when he had lifted her mask was given a hideous prominence, and the reporter confessed that it was this "happy accident" which disclosed identities to him, out for a

story. The unusual circumstance of a dancing Quaker would have been a sufficient story. But in following the charming Quaker costume for character matter he had been presented with a sight of their unmasked faces, and the sound of a kiss.

The final witticism of the jolly reporter was that the pretty Quaker would undoubtedly be called before the annual meeting, then but three days off, to be dealt with according to her deserts. What these might be he had gathered from several representative Quakers, who made them briefly but sufficiently terrible.

Doctor Rem did not shave that day. For after he had read the part of the paper which he and the Quaker lady occupied, he received a telegram from Mrs. Jarn.

“She is still here. She dare not go home. You have broken her heart. Come at once to consult with me. You are a brute!”

X

BY THE RIGHT OF A HUSBAND

Now, when the Great Meeting came, everything happened precisely as the jolly reporter had foretold — and more. The trembling sinner was arraigned and put upon her defence.

Then John Rem rose, tall, and, with a dignity no one thought he had, walked over and took his place at the sinner's side, and begged that he might be permitted to speak for her. And, being asked by what right he claimed to make her defence, he answered sturdily :

“By the right of a husband,” and then went on in a strong and determined voice, “and I hope, sir, that I may take the place — I — ”

But at that moment John Rem, notwithstanding his experiences, was suddenly in the midst of the most dramatic situation he had ever known.

Slowly every head of the three thousand in the hall drooped. He looked backward and

forward, right and left, and saw not a face. Only bowed heads he saw — and silence. Not a sound. He heard the ticking of his watch. For the first time in his strenuous life something like terror possessed him. His face actually went pale.

“What is it?” he whispered to his wife.

“They are praying,” she whispered back.

“For us?”

“Yes.”

“Shall we go?”

“No. We must wait until they move.”

And so they waited. Five, ten minutes. Yet it seemed an eternity. John Rem had never such need of endurance. The perspiration streamed down his face. The little hand which crept into his grew moist. His watch continued to deafen him.

Then, in the front row, a woman's skirt rustled. Almost he had cried out, “Thank God!”

Beyond this one another raised her head. Then a little rustle passed over the vast room. No more. John Rem knew now that, had he looked, every mild eye would be upon him,

and not with animadversion. In the prayer they had placed him — her — the whole matter before God.

The moderator, facing them, rose and said quietly :

“John Rem, thou and thy wife, go in peace. And the blessing of the God of our fathers go with ye. If ye have sinned, repent.”

And, shamed and trembling, John Rem got himself and his bride out of that place.

On the face of the father of this sudden bride there was a deeper gloom than it bore that day we first saw it in this story. On the face of the gentle proselyte at his side, it must be confessed, there was a fleeting, reminiscent smile.

“There are some things we cannot help, thee knows, John,” she was saying, “and it is our duty to bear these crosses with fortitude.” The reminiscent smile grew broader. “Thee was exactly right in what thee said about guile. But thee was also right in what thee said about goodness being as communicable as guile. This young man has not the highest kind of a reputation for gentleness. But all

agree that he is honest. It displeases me very much" — and the smile was almost a laugh now — "that they should make me a mother-in-law, at my age, without my consent. But if I can forgive that, thee can forgive — hem — whatever ails thee. John, my dear husband, let us keep them with us and try that theory of thine which was so successful in my case. Let us see whether we cannot communicate our goodness to them — as they have communicated their guile to each other."

John Estover sprang upon his wife and embraced her so strongly and so suddenly that she said happily :

"Why, John, it is just as if thee was courting again !"

"Thee is right, Ann ! Thee is a better Quaker than I am. Thee adheres to the precepts and does not forget them when they are of use. There is much hope in what thee says."

"And — and — John — just think of our lovely Marian — Mary Ann — leaving us ! It is not to be thought of, is it ? I know thee

feels as strongly about that as I do. And that poor, misguided young man —”

For she had seen them coming, with fearful faces, for their forgiveness, and he had not.

They were almost at the door now.

“Is it all agreed, John?” she cried.

“Yes,” said John, “it is all agreed. Thee is a better Quaker than I am.”

And that is why they received a welcome which was more hard to bear than the one they expected.

“Now if thee were only one of us,” sighed John Estover to John Rem, as he held his two hands, and liked him at once for a certain big way he had with him.

“What do you mean?” asked the younger man. “I hope that having forgiven us, you will not stop halfway.”

“Ah, yes, that. Look to Ann for that! But if thee was a Friend, we might reclaim thee —”

“I am a Friend,” shouted John Rem, tremendously happy to remember in time what he had not remembered much for years.

“What!”

It came in three voices—and six hands were laid with various expressions of tragedy upon him.

“Not very orthodox,” confessed honest John Rem, “perhaps a confirmed backslider. But I claim my place in the church of my fathers, and I mean to keep it better in the future than in the past — with — with — the help of my — wi — wife! —” he got it out with a gulp — “and you. I am a Friend, sir. My father and my mother were, God bless them! I tried to tell it at the meeting. But they began to pray for us.”

“My dear son John —” said John Estover to John Rem.

Now, do you observe how right Mrs. Estover was in her views and practices concerning the “management” of husbands and fathers, and churches, and other things?

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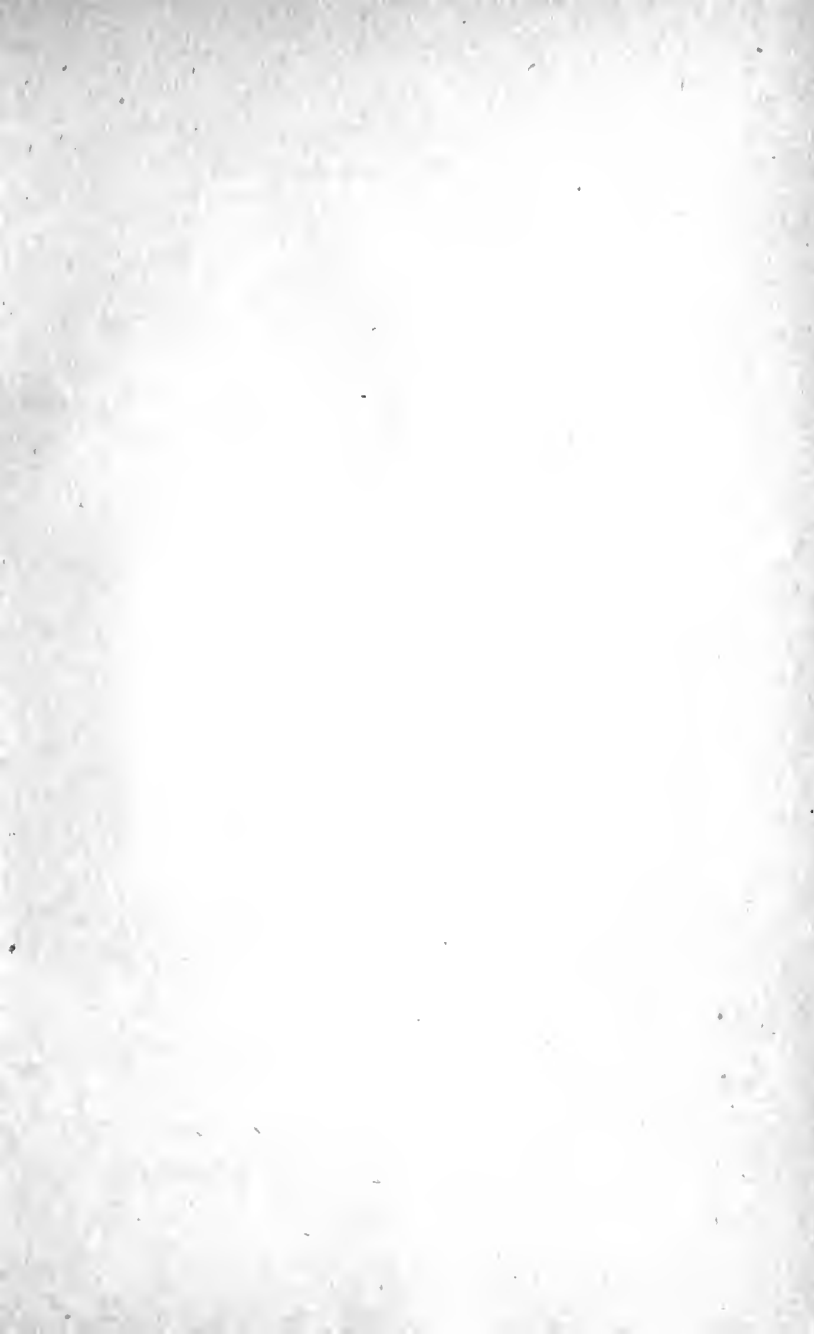
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